

DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

Important SUBJECTS.

To which are added,

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE,

IN THE

Cathedral Church of *St. Paul, London.*

IN

TWO VOLUMES.

BY

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VOLUME II.

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ERRATA in the First Volume.

Page 12, line 2, read *Consideration*. p. 32, l. 8, a Comma after *begin*. p. 108, l. 19, read *beneficial*. p. 110, l. 15, a Colon after *untouched*. p. 126, l. 5, read *Pleasures*. p. 142, l. 15, a Colon after *Enjoyments*. p. 199, l. 10, for *shen* read *thin*. p. 230, l. 24, for *invincible* read *invisible*. p. 245, l. 3, after *that is*, add *so*. p. 247, l. 20, after *Thought*, only a Comma. p. 288, l. 10, for *Passion* read *Fashion*. p. 330, l. 5, for *you* in both Places read *us*. l. 22, for *was* read *were*. p. 383, l. 4, read *Asian*. p. 392, l. 21, dele the Parentheses. p. 404, l. 20, read *Pleasures*.

ERRATA in the Second Volume.

Page 129, l. 3, after *once* add, *as a celebrated Writer ob-*
serveth. p. 140, l. 8, for, *for fear of him* read *that fear*
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SERMON I.

The Notion of Pride stated, and the
Pretensions to it examined.



ROMANS XII. 3.

*Not to think of himself more highly than he
ought to think, but to think soberly.*

IT is a common Observation; that, SERMON I.
however forward Men may be to re-
pine at the unequal Portion, which
God has allotted them of worldly Bless-
ings; yet they are generally well satisfied
with their Share of inward Endowments:
it being as hard to meet with a Person, who
humbly thinks he has too little Sense and
Merit, as it is to find one, who fancies he
has too great Riches and Honours:

What makes Men uneasy in their Cir-
cumstances, is that they are continually set-
ting to View the *bright* Side of *themselves*,
and the *dark* Side of their *Condition* in Life;

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the

the first to find out their own Grievances, and the last to discern their own Faults and Follies. Whereas if they took a contrary Method, they would perceive, that God had been kinder to the Worst of Men, than the very Best of Men could deserve.

Self-Love is a Passion interwoven in our Frame and Constitution; and if it be not kept under due Regulations, Self-Conceit will be the necessary Effect of it. For since we are apt to believe, what we wish to be true; is it a Wonder, if we over-rate those Perfections, which we have, and imagine ourselves possesst of those, which we have no Title to?

In our Youth Pleasure has often the Ascendant, in the Middle of our Age Ambition; and Avarice brings up the Rear at the Close of Life. But this Vice, of which I am speaking, attends too many of us from the Cradle to the Grave: we being equally vain, whether we pursue Pleasure, Honour or Wealth: The Master Passion of the Soul is the same, though it's Servants are often changed according to the different Stages of Life.

For this Reason the Apostle offers in the Words of my Text with a peculiar Emphasis

and the Pretensions to it examined.

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phasis and Force. *For I say according to* SERMON
the Grace given unto me to every one among I.
you, not to think of himself more highly than
he ought to think, but to think soberly.

In which Words St. Paul adviseth us, that instead of viewing ourselves in that engaging Light, which the servile Flattery of others, or our own assuming Vanity (our greatest Flatterer of all) might place us in, we should endeavour to form a true Estimate of our Worth, or in the Words of the Text *think soberly.*

Among the many Imputations, which we are willing to fasten upon those whom we have an Aversion to, that of Pride is, I think, one of the most common. Now, if we would examine the innermost Recesses of the Mind, I doubt we should often find, that our own Pride is the Cause, why we tax others with it. Men elate with the Thoughts of their own Sufficiency are ever imagining, that others are wanting in their Regard to them, and therefore very apt to conclude, that Pride must be the Cause, why they withhold from them that Respect, which they have an unquestioned Right to in their own Opinion. Of this we have a pregnant Instance in Scripture: *You*

B 2

take

take too much upon you, said Corah and his Accomplices, when they themselves were taking too much upon them, and invading the Province of *Aaron*. Hence it is, that their Character seldom escapes the Brand of Vanity, who have the Fortune to be possessors of those Accomplishments, which would make their Detractors vain.

But before we asperse others with this Censure, let us consider what Pride is, and correct our Mistakes about the Nature of it.

In the following Discourse I shall therefore *Ist* state the Notion of Pride.

IIdly, Consider the Unreasonableness of this Vice.

Ist then, I am to state the Notion of Pride.

Our Happiness, as well as Knowledge, arises from Sensation and Reflection; and may be reduced to these two Articles, *viz.* that of pleasing Sensations, and that of agreeable Thoughts. Now as to a Desire of indulging the former without Check or Controul, are owing Lust, Drunkenness and Intemperance; so from a Desire of indulging the latter beyond Measure, Pride takes it's Original. And it is very remarkable,

and the Pretensions to it examined.

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I.

able, that those, who most deny themselves *pleasing Sensations*, will be, except they are very much upon their Guard, apt overmuch to indulge *agreeable Reflections* upon themselves. In Proportion as they resist the coarser Self-Indulgences, the more refined and spiritual Vices will gain an easier Entrance. Just as subtile and thin Matter finds Admittance and fills up the Vacancy, where Bodies of a grosser Contexture cannot penetrate. Pride springs from a partial View of ourselves, a View of the bright Side of ourselves, without balancing against it our numerous Imperfections and Defects, how little Good we can perform without the Grace of God, and how little we actually do perform even with it. It does not consist in the bare *Thought*, that we have some Accomplishments, as for Instance, good Sense, Beauty, great Abilities; but in that *Exultation* of Mind, which is consequent upon that Thought, unallayed by any Self-Dissatisfaction arising from a Survey of our Sins and Frailties. If our Virtues and Perfections (supposing them our own Acquisitions) were unallayed; then an unallayed Self-Complacency might be the Result of them: But as human Excellen-

cies will have a Mixture of human Weaknesses, our Self-Complacency ought to be moderated in Proportion to our Faults and Imperfections. The Difference between Humility and Pride consists in this; that the humble Man, whatever Talents he is possessed of, considers them as so many Trusts reposed in him by God, which are so far from raising his Pride, that they excite his Caution; as knowing that to *whom much is given, of him much will be required*. Whereas the Proud values himself, as if he were not only the *Subject* but the *Author* of those good Qualities; and so makes an Idol of himself, instead of adoring and thanking God for them. The proud Man is dazzled with the Lustre of his own Excellencies: Whereas the humble Man, though not insensible of *particular* Endowments, yet thinks meanly of Himself *absolutely* and upon the *Whole*; and begs that God would not weigh his Merits, but pardon his Offences.

A total Self-Loathing, however, would be as great a Fault, as a clear and unmixed Self-Liking: It would deaden all the Powers of the Soul, and sink it into a State of Inaction. There is a Medium between a

and the Pretensions to it examined.

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just Sense of our Abilities, and an exorbi-
tant Opinion of them. The Former is of
admirable Service to Mankind, when qua-
lified with a due Proportion of Discretion
and Modesty. A just Consciousness of those
Talents, with which God has entrusted us,
will give Life and Spirit to our Undertak-
ings, and be a powerful Motive to those
Actions, which may make us truly glori-
ous: Modesty and Discretion will be a Bar
to those Attempts, which being above our
Sphere may make us ridiculous. Thus do
these two act in Concert, and while the
former prompts us to display ourselves; the
latter prevents us from exposing ourselves.
The Fire will aspire upwards, but it will
be with Trembling.

SERMON
I.

It is a false Humility to have low de-
rogatory Thoughts of human *Nature* in
general, as if it were intirely and essential-
ly corrupt, without any Mixture of Good-
ness: True Humility chiefly teacheth us to
have low Notions of those *personal* Diffe-
rences, which *distinguish* one Man from an-
other. Man ought to reverence himself,
as a Being capable of Knowledge, Virtue,
and everlasting Happiness: but then he be-
comes blameable, when he is elate upon

SERMON

I.

the Account of *accidental* Differences; if, for Instance, being a Man of a large Compass of Thought and deep Penetration he shall despise another, because he is of a duller Apprehension or perhaps an Idiot. For it is to be considered, that the Soul is of the same Kind in Both, equally great as to all essential Qualities in the one as in the other; and the only Superiority he has consists perhaps in a finer Contexture of the Brain, or a livelier Flow of the animal Spirits: which is plain from this; that an Accident or a Disease shall reduce a Man of the most distinguished Sense to the Condition of a Natural. And it would be just as reasonable to despise a Man, because He could not work as well as we with wretched Instruments; as to contemn a Man, because He cannot reason as well with a Body incommodiously framed for Thinking; The Body being an Instrument to the Soul in Thinking. The Soul of one Man is lodged as it were in a commodious lightsome Mansion, where it can command a spacious Prospect, and take in Variety of Objects; and the Soul of another may be pent up as it were in a dark Dungeon, where there are few or no Inlets of Knowledge.

But

and the Pretensions to it examined.

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But when this earthly Tabernacle is dissolved, and the Mind shall be enlarged, SERMON
I.

they will, both of them, be upon an equal Foot. When that Knowledge which is in Part shall be done away, and that which is perfect is come; a Man of the dullest Apprehension shall perhaps be in a Moment wiser, than the greatest Scholar after a Life laid out in painful Researches can be here. So little Reason is there to lay great Stress upon those *accidental* Differences which distinguish one Man from another; at the same time that it is Ingratitude to God, as well as false Humility, to depreciate human Nature in general.

H Pride then is, as the Text expresseth it, the *Thinking too highly of ourselves*. It is an over-weening Conceit of our Dignity, founded upon some real or imaginary Superiority to our Neighbours: which, when it expresseth itself in an imperious and overbearing Carriage, and a commanding Mien, is called Haughtiness; and is generally the Fault of a narrow Education: Whereas Men of an enlarged Conversation give into a more delicate Pride, which can never enjoy itself, but when it is so artful, as to conceal itself under the Mask of Humility.

The

The Generality of Mankind consider only the Surface of their Actions, without ever sounding the Depths of their Heart, and tracing the inward Workings of the Soul. Indeed we cannot but be sensible of the *violent* Emotions and Agitations of any Passion, but the *still* and gentler Movements oft escape our Notice. Thus when Pride becomes so enormous, as, in the Words of a judicious Writer, to make Men use their Servants as if they were Brutes, their Inferiors as Servants, and their Equals as Inferiors; Men must be blind to over-look this Vice in others, or even in themselves. But when it conceals itself under studied Disguises and Refinements, it will, except we are very attentive, elude our Observation. To give some Instances, a Person is perhaps very liberal: but while he does not examine the Principle of his Liberality, he shall not perceive, that Pride is often the Principle of his Liberality, that he only makes an Exchange of Money for Glory, and dispenses his Favours, because he values the Vanity of Giving, more than the Thing, which he gives. Another mistakes the Affability of the Gentleman, or Man of the World, for the Humility of the

and the Pretensions to it examined. 11

the Christian. Whereas he ought to con-^{SERMON}
sider, that we often beat down those Vices ^{I.}
which are flagrant and glaring, by others
which are secret and out of Sight. Thus
we often get the better of Intemperance
not by a virtuous Principle, but merely by
a passionate Fondness for long Life, by the
Fear of Death or by Avarice. Thus we
often sacrifice our outward Pride to an in-
ward one. We keep in our Insolence, be-
cause a supercilious and contemptuous Treat-
ment of others would only make us con-
temptible. But Affability and a Complac-
ency of Behaviour opens us a Passage to
the Hearts of Men, and gains us an advan-
tageous Situation in their Minds. It may
be a more artful Manner to engage that
Respect which we seem to decline. Men
of this Turn may be very affable, not to
do Honour to others, but as they take Af-
fability to be an Honour to themselves.

It has been observed, I suppose, by way
of Compliment to the present Age, that
one Vice at least, viz. that of Hypocrisy,
seems to be banished from among us: But
alas! unless we could divest human Nature
of it's Weaknesses, no Vice will ever be
quite extinct, though it may appear under
another

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I.

another Form. Thus a *religious Hypocrisy* seems indeed in some Measure to be no more: But in the Room of it, there has started up a *genteel and polite Hypocrisy*, a certain Decency of Behaviour, which, by putting on the *Appearances* of every Virtue, prevents the *Reality* of any. What is foul and loathsome in each Vice, Men must keep out of Sight, unless they would be public Nuisances: But then they only part with it's outward Deformity, without any Amendment of the Heart. Nay some, I believe, confound the Ideas of Politeness and Morality. They mistake the *Aversion*, which they have in themselves, to whatever is *ill-bred, unseemly and offensive* in any *Sin*, for a genuine *Love of Goodness*: They imagine that to be a *Virtue*, which is only *Vice refined*.

The more a Man knows of the World, the more sensible he will be, that he must conceal the *odious* Part of Pride, unless he would be odious *himself*. But then he may retire into himself to cherish each favourable and delightful Idea of his own Worth, that soothes and flatters his Vanity; shutting out all humbling and mortifying Reflections, that like so many plain-dealing

Friends

and the Pretensions to it examined. 13

Friends would put him out of Humour SERMON
I. with himself, by suggesting to him unwellcome, though necessary, Truths. And yet this is the very Essence of Pride.

For Humility consists in the inward Frame and Disposition of the Mind, in a right Judgment, in the main, of ourselves: But, because if we form a right Judgment of ourselves, we must, upon the Whole, think lowly of ourselves; therefore the Idea annexed to the Term Humility is that of a low Opinion of ourselves: It is when we ascribe the Glory of our Actions to God alone, who gives us Power to act; like polished Vessels which reflect back again the Rays of Light which they receive, instead of absorbing, imbibing and detaining them. It is to have a deep Sense that God created us out of Nothing, and that Sin reduceth us to a State worse than Nothing without the Mercies of God, and the Merits of our Saviour.

Though there may be a Sincerity without Humility, yet a Simplicity of Manners is a necessary Ingredient of it. For there is a Difference between Simplicity and Sincerity; or, in other Words, a Man may be very sincere without any Simplicity: He may
not

not be ambitious to be thought what he is not; yet be too ostentatious of what he is: Unable to wait till others discover, he is impatient to display his own Perfections with all the Advantages which Art and Address can give them. Whereas Simplicity is free from every Alloy of Vanity, or any thing of a shewish Nature; it shines forth with natural and unstudied Beauties, *is not puffed up, seeketh not it's own*, the Praise that is due to it; and it's chief Ornament is, that it does not affect any. And yet the true *Sublime* of Life, as well as of Writing, consisteth in the *Simple*. For noble Actions and noble Qualities, like noble Thoughts, support *themselves*, they have an inherent Greatness and a native Lustre, which needs not foreign Pomp and borrowed Ornaments. Nothing does them more Harm, than setting them off too much and over-charging them with Decorations.

To obviate Mistakes and to remove Scruples, it will be necessary to observe that Pride is not *merely* to think favourably of ourselves: For then indeed Pride, as some late Authors have maintained, would be an universal Vice; every Body being, more or less, *biased* in his own Favour. But
Pride

and the Pretensions to it examined. 15

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I.

Pride is to think *so* favourably of ourselves, as to exclude a modest Diffidence of ourselves, and a salutary Sense of the Number of human Frailties, the Imperfection of our Virtues, the Malignity of our Crimes, and our Dependance on God for every thing good *in* us and *for* us. A Man may think himself *somewhat* wiser and better than he is; who, notwithstanding, may have an humble or low Opinion of himself upon the *Whole*, as being far from thinking himself wise and good *enough*; far from *thinking that he standeth* collected in himself, and therefore need not *take heed lest he fall*. A Man may not imagine himself quite so faulty as he is; (*for who can tell how oft he offendeth?*) who yet may deserve the Character of an humble Man; if, at the same time that he endeavoureth to improve in Virtue, and get clear of every presumptuous Sin; he strive to detect, and beg of God to cleanse him from, his secret and unsuspected Faults. Pride is a Vice or moral Evil: And Nothing can be Evil, any further, than it is in it's genuine Tendency productive of Evil. But what evil Effects would an Opinion too favourable of ourselves be attended with; provided it did

not

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I.

not rise to so high a Pitch, as to make us think presumptuously and securely of ourselves, contemptuously and uncharitably of our Fellow-Creatures, and behave irreverently and ungratefully to our Creator? It is, I doubt, almost impossible to hold the Balance exactly even without the least Inclination to our Side; it is impossible for us, who are Parties, to pass Judgment on ourselves with the strict Rigour of Justice without the least Partiality, without any favourable Softenings and Allowances: All, that can be expected from us, is, what I believe every wise and modest Man doeth, *viz.* that looking around us and considering how apt every Man is in some Degree to over-value himself, we learn from hence to entertain and cherish a constant Suspicion and Misgiving, that *we* do so too: which Misgiving disposeth us to look deeper into ourselves, to trust not so much to our own Abilities, as to our Vigilance and Circumspection, and God's Blessing upon us, and to make our humble Application to him, that he would *look well, if there be any Way of Wickedness in us, and lead us in the Way everlasting.*

Having

and the Pretensions to it examined. 17

Having thus stated the Nature of Pride, SERMON
I.
I proceed, *Illy*, To shew the Unreasonableness of this Vice. And this I shall do, by examining our Pretensions to Pride.

Are we proud of Riches? Riches cannot alter the Nature of Things, they cannot make a Man worthy, that is worthless in himself: They may command an insipid Complaisance, a formal Homage, and ceremonious Professions of Respect, and teach a servile World to speak a Language foreign to their Hearts; but where a Largeness of Soul is wanting, they can never procure an affectionate Esteem, grateful Sentiments, and an undissembled Love, the willing Tribute of a generous Heart to Merit only. The Value of the Estate may be very great; but that of the Man is not at all greater; if he does not employ his Estate as the great Engine to procure moral Pleasures, and to do benevolent Offices. And if it be true Wisdom to think that *early*, which we must think at last; let us now be convinced, which we shall certainly be hereafter, that there is nothing truly valuable, noble and manly, but the good Sense to know our Duty, an hearty Inclination to practise it, and a determinate

181 *The Notion of Pride stated,*

SERMON I. Steadiness to persevere in it to the End.

That the only true Substantial Greatness is rightly to apprehend, affectionately to worship, and diligently to imitate our heavenly Father. The Unthinking may be carried away with Appearances, instead of Realities; but the Judicious should consider Things intrinsically, and think him the greatest, who strives, as much as in Him lies, to make others happy by his Benevolence, good by his Example, and wise by his Instructions.

Do we value ourselves upon our Power? No; what is remarked by some Body of other, is a great Truth, viz. That there is no Good in Power, but merely the Power of doing Good. Upon our worldly Prudence? Those who are acquainted with History know how often the best-laid Designs have proved abortive. Amongst all the Maxims of worldly Prudence, this is one of the best, viz. That we should endeavour to discover the reigning Passions in every Man, whom we would manage; and when we have found out that, we have got a Handle to turn him, which Way we please. But then every Man, besides his reigning Passion, has his particular Caprice

or

and the Pretensions to it examined. 19

or Harmony, which will make our Measures often miscarry. Besides, no one Passion is perhaps the perpetual Dictator. No, our Heart is rather a little Commonwealth, where they govern us with an alternate Sway, and sometimes our Ambition, sometimes our Anger, sometimes our Fear is uppermost. And this being the case, Human Policy therefore must be uncertain, because Man, who is the Subject of it, is so uncertain, wavering and inconstant; and there can be no fixed and stated Maxims to please and manage so changeable and inconsistent a Creature. But we may by certain and unchanging Rules gain the Love of that Being, with whom there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning. No Prudence therefore but the spiritual, viz. To please Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, can be certain. Are you proud of your distinguished Virtue? He who is proud of distinguished Abilities, Learning and Wealth, is not the less able, learned and wealthy, because he is proud of them. But he, who is proud of distinguished Virtue, ceaseth to be virtuous, by his being so. For the Man that

is pleased with any Degree of Virtue, merely because it is uncommon, would be sorry, if what he values himself upon, as a singular Mark of Distinction, should become common, and all Mankind should rise to the same Eminence as himself in Morality. Now this Temper argues a Want of Benevolence, and, consequently, of Virtue. It shews a mean, narrow, selfish Turn of Mind, to triumph in any extraordinary Attainment, solely because it is peculiar to us, or confined to a select Few; A truly generous, benevolent, and virtuous Spirit would wish, that *All were not only almost, but altogether such as he is;* and be the happier in himself, if the Bulk of Mankind were Partakers of that Happiness which results from Virtue.

Besides, those who *seldom* act or think nobly, may be *proud* of what they so *seldom* think or act. But to those, who *constantly* entertain great Thoughts, and do noble Actions, to them they are become so *familiar*, that *they* make no great *Impressions* upon them. At the same Time that they rise above the common Level of Action, they think they do nothing but what is common; because nothing but what is

com-

and the Pretensions to it examined. 21

commonly done by *them*. The Favours, SERMON
II
which you cannot receive without warm
Emotions of Joy and Gratitude; they can
bestow with great Coolness and Unconcern-
edness. Because, though to receive such
Favours is something unusual to you; yet
to do them is nothing new to them.

The more virtuous any Man is, the
more modest and unpretending he must be.
He must be sensible of the numerous Dis-
orders which lurk within, of his sickly Ap-
petites, and the Corruption of his Heart;
and how often the precarious Light of Rea-
son, that *Candle* which God has lighted up
in his Mind, has been *put out* by some sud-
den *Gust* of Passion. If a Child could read
those foolish, vain, wicked Imaginations,
which the best of us have sometimes in-
dulged; we should be ashamed to look
him in the Face, and be out of Conceit
with ourselves. And yet we do not some-
times stifle them immediately, though we
know that He, whose tremendous Majesty
fills the whole Compass of Heaven and
Earth, cannot but be privy to them, and
discern the secret Meditations of our Heart.
The Knowledge of the Greatest of Beings,
who *understandeth our Thoughts long before,*

The Notion of Pride stated,

hath less Influence, than that of the influence of Mortals would have, supposing he could know the inward Workings of the Soul. We are not worthy to approach Him, who dwelleth in unapproachable Glory, but through the Merits of our Redeemer. We could not expect any Instances of Goodness from a Being less than infinitely good.

And yet, notwithstanding our many Imperfections, I question whether, upon a Supposition that every one were to be the Judge and Rewarder of his own Merits, *this World* would be half large enough, that every one might take a little. Several other Worlds must be taken in, to recompense them, as they think, fully, and adjust the Rewards to their imaginary Deserts.

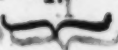
He who thinks, that he has no Weaknesses to subdue, either wholly or in Part, no virtuous Habits to acquire, or, at least, to improve and perfect; he who in short thinks himself quite good enough; proves, by the very Thought, that he is not so. Then our Salvation is most in Danger, when we dismiss all Apprehensions about it.

But if Virtue (human Virtue) affords no just Grounds for Pride, much less does the

man

man Knowledge, which bears no Proportion to our Ignorance. The greatest and the least Objects equally baffle our Enquiries. Too great and disproportioned an Object embarrasses and oversets the Understanding; too little an one eludes and escapes it. It is God alone, whose Almighty Power, nothing is so great that it can encumber; whose infinite Wisdom, nothing is so little that it can escape. Presumptuous Man! wouldst thou understand the Manner in which three Persons exist in the same unbounded Essence? Before thou strivest to fathom the Nature of the Greatest of all Beings; first, if thou canst, comprehend how the least of Beings exist, Animals an hundred times less than a Mite, Myriads of such Animals, as can only be discerned by the Help of Glasses. If the whole Body be so minute, as to be undiscoverable by the naked Eye; how much less the Limbs, of which that whole Body is compounded? How much less still the Nerves, the Veins, the Blood in those Veins, the animal Spirits in that Blood; till we approach to the very Borders of nothing? For these Animals contain, in Miniature, all those Parts which we have in

SERMON
I.



larger Dimensions. In short, for one Thing, that we can plausibly account for in the Book of Nature, there are Millions of Things, of which we can give no Account. Yet we, who find almost all Things so puzzling and unaccountable in the Book of Nature, expect that every Thing in the Book of Grace, which proceeds from the same Author, should be plain and level to our Capacities.

True Knowledge is one of the strongest Fences against Pride: It opens indeed our Eyes; but then it is only as *Adam's* were, to discern our own Nakedness. When good Sense and Reason speak, they come, like their great Author, God, in the *still small Voice*, without any empty Noise or Loquacity, or overbearing Pretensions. And those who keep the best Sense within, seldom hang out the Sign of Knowledge. Men of this Stamp will own their entire Ignorance in many Things, and their imperfect Knowledge in all the rest. Whereas the Ignorant are sometimes peremptory and positive in Matters quite above their Sphere, and, like some Creatures, are the *bolder* for being *blind*. In a Word, the Ingenuous will confess the Weakness of their Reason, and

and the Pretensions to it examined. 25

and the Presumptuous betray it by their ^{Sermon}
being so. ^{I.}

Some may perhaps value themselves upon the Strength of their Genius, the Largeness of their Heart, even as *the Sand upon the Sea Shore*; and the Brightness of their Parts. Alas! the Strength of the Passions, and the Quickness of the Appetites, generally keep Pace with the Brightness of the Imagination. And hence it comes to pass, that those who have, with an uncommon Compass of Thought, inculcated excellent Rules of Morality in their Writings, have broke through them all in their Practice: The Brightness of their Parts enabling them to lay down fine Precepts, and the Strength of their Passions tempting them to transgress them. A Man may discourse admirably well upon Oeconomy, who never was Master of it in the Conduct of Life: Because he may take a Pleasure in discoursing upon Oeconomy, or any other Subject, upon which he can display a beautiful Fancy; but to look carefully into his Affairs, to balance his Accounts, and to proportion his Expences to his Income, is a Drudgery, to which he cares not to stoop. There is not a greater Inlet to Vice and Misery, than to have

have (which is generally the Case of Men of Wit, and the Cause of the Irregularity of their Conduct) too much Life and Spirit to confine one's Self to the common Business of Life; and too much Fire and Passion to relish the calm Satisfaction of it. For this Temper puts a Man always in Quest of something exquisitely passionate, transporting, and every Way fitted to an high Taste, which cannot take up with the ordinary Affairs of Life. The Consequence of which is, that he overleaps those Bounds, which confine meaner Mortals, and precipitates himself into an endless Train of Inconveniencies.

But let us suppose, what is not a very common Case, that a Brightness of Imagination, and a well-poised Judgment, are happily united in the same Person; yet the ablest Writer, the brightest Genius, the greatest Man that ever lived; nay, an Archangel of the highest Class may say, "O my God! that I live and that I please, if ever I please, is owing to thee. May it be then my uppermost View to do thy Pleasure; from whom I have the Ability to please."

How vain and uncertain all Things are here below, appears from this, that we hold

and the Pretensions to it examined. 27

hold even Reason itself, that ennobling SERMON
Quality, that boasted Prerogative, and di- I.
stinguishing Perfection of human Nature,

upon a very precarious Tenure; and something, as one expresseth it, with a human Shape and Voice, has often survived every thing human besides. The Brain, by too great Quickness and Stretch of Thought, like a Chariot Wheel, by the Rapidity of it's Motion, takes Fire: The thin Partitions, which divided Wit from Madness, are broken down. The most penetrating and sparkling Geniuses border upon, and sometimes more than border upon, downright Frenzy. They shew us even then, in their lucid Intervals, the Monuments and Traecs of what they have been, like the Monuments of old *Rome*, majestick even in it's Ruins. Their sudden Starts of Sense, though soon broken off, give us more Pleasure, than the sober uniform Thoughts of Men of slower Apprehension: Just as the maimed Statues, the broken Pillars, and imperfect triumphal Arches of old *Rome*, delight us more, than the entire Performances of less able and less masterly Hands.

If then Reason itself, which distinguisheth us from Brutes, be so very precarious,
and

and depends upon such a fine and subtle
 Contexture of the Brain, as is liable to be
 disordered by several Accidents; the Obser-
 vation I would draw from hence is very
 material, and worth our Consideration. If
 Mankind were to be vain of nothing, but
 what is their lasting Property, of which
 they cannot be stripped; they would be
 vain of nothing at all; there would be no
 such Thing as Vanity.

Art thou then proud of Knowledge?
 Alas! the dim Light of human Reason looks
 feeble and languid at the first Thought and
 Contemplation of that *Father of Lights*,
in whom there is no Darkness at all. Dost
 thou pride thyself upon thy Power? All
 the little Grandeur we can boast, is lost in
 the Consideration of that *only Potentate*,
who dwelleth in Light which no one can
approach to. Art thou elate upon the Ac-
 count of an ample Fortune? Consider him
 to whom the *whole World* belongs, *and all*
that is therein; who wanting nothing him-
 self, supplies the Wants of every other Be-
 ing. All human Pride shrinks into nothing,
 when we contemplate that great Being, *who*
is All in All. And the Man, who is pos-
 sessed with just Notions of an all-perfect God,
 will

and the Pretensions to it examined. 29

will never make a God of any thing else, SERMON
much less of himself. I.

Dost thou value thyself upon popular Applause, and a great Name? Think how many that have made a distinguished Figure in the World, are dead and unregarded, as if they never had been; their Deaths unlamented, their Vacancy filled up, and their Persons missed no more, than a Drop of Water, when taken from the whole Ocean. And is it worth our while to strive to please a vain fantastic World, which will soon disregard us, and think itself full as well without us; instead of laying out our Endeavours to please that Almighty Being, whose inexhaustible Power and Goodness will make his Servants happy to all Eternity? How ridiculous are all our Aims; except this be the grand Aim, in which all the rest center! A Man, for Instance, makes it his Business to ensure to himself a Name after Death; that is, to save four or five Letters (for what is a Name besides?) from Oblivion: And yet shall be neglectful of securing immortal Happiness: He shall be fond of an *imaginary* Life after Death; and yet make no Provision for that real Life, which is to last

last for ever and ever solicitous to have
his Name written and preserved in any
Book, but in *that Book*, where it will only
 be of Service to him, *the Book of Life*. O
 Virtue! when this solemn Pageantry of
 earthly Grandeur shall be no more, when
 all Distinctions, but moral and religious,
 shall vanish; when this Earth shall be dis-
 solved, when the Moon shall be no more a
 Light by Night, neither the Sun by Day;
 thou shalt still survive thy Votary's immor-
 tal Friend, thou shalt appear, like thy great
 Author, in perfect Beauty; thy Lustre un-
 diminished; and thy Glory unperishable.

Let him therefore that glorieth, glory in
 the Lord. He alone, who gave and upholds
 all the Powers of Soul and Body, he alone
 deserveth the Glory of them. As we are
 Creatures, the Work of God's Hands, we
 have nothing to glory of: But as we are Sin-
 ners, and, in that Respect, the Work of our
 own Hands, we have much to be ashamed of.
 We then give the greatest Proof to God of
 our Worthiness, when we have a deep Sense
 and make an humble Confession of our own
 Unworthiness.

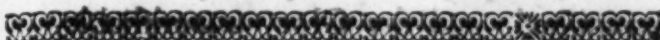
To God therefore, and to Him only,
 be ascribed, as is most due, all Might, and

SERMON II.

On the Advantages of Affliction.

Being a SERMON occasioned by the Death
of Mr. Burton, of Montpelier-Row, in
Twickenham.

Preached in Twickenham-Chapel, on Mid-
lent Sunday, 1742; and published at
the Request of the Audience.



PSALM LXXVII. 3.
*When I am in Heaviness, I will think
upon God.*

THE whole Psalm is written with SERMON II.
a very beautiful Spirit of Poetry;
and if we consider it merely as an
human Composition, may justly challenge
our highest Admiration. In the former
Part, the Psalmist vents an Heart over-
charged with Grief, and writes with the
deepest Emotions of Sorrow. *In the Day*

of my Trouble I sought the Lord, my Soul ran in the Night and ceased not, my Soul refused to be comforted. And again, at the seventh Verse, Will the Lord absent himself for ever, and will he be no more favourable? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercies? Thus does he discharge the Fulness of his Soul; till, by a very natural, and yet very surprizing Transition, from a Rehearsal of his own Woes, he passes on to celebrate the marvellous Acts of God. For, to relieve himself under the Pressure of his present Afflictions, he has Recourse to the former Mercies, which God had vouchsafed to the Israelites. Surely, I will remember thy Wonders of old. This ushers in those sublime Flights of Poetry, which are peculiar to the Genius of the Eastern Nations. The Waters saw Thee, O God; the Waters saw Thee: They were afraid: The Depths also were troubled, &c. Then, to represent the Unsearchableness of God, he compares him, by a very beautiful Allusion, to a Being walking upon the Waters, the Traces of whose Feet could not therefore be discovered: Thy Way is in the Sea, and thy Paths in the great Waters, and thy Footsteps are not known. If

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On the Advantages of Affliction. 33

If we should set aside the Sanction of ^{SERMON}
divine Authority, which stamps an addi-
tional Value upon the Psalm; yet it could
not fail to affect every Reader of a refined
Taste. And when we either consider those
melting Strains, in which he describes his
own Woes; or that exalted Vein, in which
he paints the Majesty of God; we shall be
at a Loss, whether to admire more the
Greatness of that Genius, which could ac-
quit itself with so masterly an Hand in
both the pathetic and sublime Way of
Writing; or the Justness of that Judgment,
which could with so dexterous an Address,
with so easy, and I had almost said, so
natural an Art, glide from the one to the
other.

The Author of the Psalm had a Mind
deeply tinctured with Piety. When his
Heart was in Heaviness, he *thought upon*
God: But to think on him then with Plea-
sure, he must have set God constantly be-
fore him in the smooth Seasons of Life.
This will lead me to shew,

Ist, The Happiness and Reasonableness
of turning our Thoughts to God in gene-
ral.

II^{dly}, The peculiar Advantages of Affliction, to bring us to a just Sense of God, and our Duty.

Ist, The Happiness and Reasonableness of turning our Thoughts to God in general.

To repair to God only, when under Affliction, is to use Him as some conceited Philosophers have done, who never have Recourse to Him, and take Him into their Scheme, but when they are in Distress, when they meet with some Difficulty, which they cannot plausibly account for, or get over, without calling Him in to their Aid.

Besides, never is there more Occasion for Good-Humour, Chearfulness, and an undisturbed Serenity of Mind, than when we form our religious Notices. For, though the brightest Ideas of the Deity may be retained and cherished under any Indisposition of Mind or Body; yet, to retain and cherish them at that Juncture, they must be imprinted in indelible Characters on the Soul, when it was in an easy Situation: Otherwise, Religion will not brighten up our Minds, and *lighten the Darknes* of them;

On the Advantages of Affliction.

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them; our Minds will darken and discolour Religion. And what has given some People a Dislike for it, is; that having never applied themselves seriously to it, but when they were in a dull, joyless, sullen Humour, which represented every Thing they were conversant about to be so too; the Notions of Religion, and of a joyless State, have been, however unduly connected, ever after inseparable. By meditating on God only, or even chiefly, in a melancholy Hour, you will associate the Idea of Gloominess and Horror with that of Religion: You will view Him, just as He was worshipped in old Gothic Buildings, in a dim solemn Light, which sheds a pensive Gloom over, and saddens every Object. You will not serve Him with that Gladness, which He requires: For God loveth a cheerful Worshipper, as well as a *cheerful Giver*. But you will repair with Reluctance and Constraint to that *Service*, which is *perfect Freedom*.

We are indigent Creatures, insufficient of ourselves for our own Happiness, and therefore ever seeking it somewhere else. But where we shall effectually seek for it, is the Question. Unless the Thoughtful

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and

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II.

and the Pensive direct their Thoughts to, and cast their Cares upon God, there will be little Difference between Them and the Gay and Unthinking, besides this; that the Latter will have more of the *Vanity* of Life; but They themselves more of the *Vexations* of it. If there were not another Life, our Business would be, not to alarm the Thinking Faculty, but to lay our too active and unquiet Thoughts to Rest. The Mind would be like a froward Child, ever fretful when fully awake; and therefore to be played and lulled asleep as fast as we can. Our main Happiness would be to forget our Misery and ourselves; to forget, that we are a Set of Beings, who, after we have toiled out the live-long Day of human Life, in Variety of Hardships; are, instead of receiving our Wages at the Close of it, to sleep out one long eternal Night in an utter Extinction of Being.

If Man had an ample Fund of Happiness in himself, without any Deficiency; whence is it, that he is continually looking out abroad for foreign Amusements; Amusements, which are of no other Use, but to keep off troublesome and ungrateful Impressions, and to make us insensible of

On the Advantages of Affliction. 37

the Tediouſneſs of Living ; Amuſements, SERMON
II.
which rather ſuſpend a Senſe of Uneaſi-
neſs, than give us any ſubſtantial Satisfac-
tion ; and keep the Soul in an equal Poize
between Pleaſure and Pain ? And is this
the great End which we have in View ?
Suppoſing we could compaſs it ; yet if it
be better not to be at all, than to be mi-
ſerable ; then certainly *juſt*, *not* to be *mi-
ſerable*, without any *poſitive* Happineſs, is
much at one, as *not* to be at all. Whence
is it, that that reſtleſs Thing the Soul, too
enterprizing to trace every Thing elſe, yea
the deep *Things* of God ; is yet too *cov-
ardly* to enquire into itſelf, and to view
the Workings of that ever-loved, yet ever-
avoided Object ? Whence is it, that the
Mind, whoſe active Energy prompts it to
give a free and unconfined Range to her
Thoughts on other Subjects, nay, to make,
if it were poſſible, the Tour of the whole
Univerſe ; yet, when ſhe comes to dwell
at Home, and to ſurvey the little World
within, flags in her Vivacity, feels her-
ſelf in a forlorn Condition, and finds a
Drowſineſs and melancholy Gloom hang-
ing upon her ? Whence is it, but that the
Soul, whenever it turns it's Thoughts in-
D 3 ward,

SERMON
II.

ward, finds within a frightful Void of solid Happiness, without any Possibility in itself of filling it up? Indeed, in a Circle of gay Follies, or in a Multiplicity of Pursuits, when a Succession of different Objects are continually striking upon the Mind, the Capacity of the Soul is taken up, and it forgets that inward Poverty and Indigence, which nothing can effectually relieve, but the unsearchable Riches of the Love of God: But when we step aside from the Noise and beaten Tracks of Life, into Solitude and Retirement, we soon perceive, that we are, without some Business to engage, or some Recreation to divert our Attention, an insupportable Burthen to our selves. You fancy the Man, whose daily Labour serves for little else but to get his daily Bread, and whose daily Bread just refreshes and strengthens him to undergo his daily Labour, to be a very miserable Object; and perhaps he is so. Would you make him more miserable? Give him a Fortune, which shall set him at Rest from his Labours, and leave him nothing at all to do: And then the Wearisomness, which resulted from a continual Drudgery, will be nothing comparable to another Kind of Weari-

On the Advantages of Affliction. 39

Wearisomness, far more irksom—the be-^{SERMON}
ing weary of himself. Observe great Num-^{II}
bers of the Opulent and the Great : What
can be *oftner* from Home than their *Per-*
sons ? Their *Thoughts*, which are *continu-*
ally from Home, ever wandering abroad,
and returning empty and unsatisfied. None
is more miserable, than a Man distracted
with Variety of Business ; except he who
has no Business, no Amusement at all.
Diversions and Pastimes, properly so called,
(for they answer no other End, but to pass
away our Time) may have the Effect of
Opiates, to beget a short Oblivion of our
Cares and ourselves : But the only Cordial
to invigorate our Spirits, and to give us an
exquisite Relish and Enjoyment of this Be-
ing, is the well-grounded Hope of a better,
through the Merits of Jesus Christ.

If then any one should ask, *Who will*
shew us any Good ? Who will point out the
Way to Felicity to us ? We must answer,
in the Psalmist's Words, *Lord, lift Thou*
up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.
For Thou art our Happiness, who alone
canst give a Stability to our moral Pleasures,
and secure us from natural Evil, or support
us under it. God has stiled himself *Light* :

And as the whole material Creation would be involved in one horrid and uncomfortable Gloom, if Light did not enliven it with it's Smiles, and beautify it with a rich Variety of Colours; so would the spiritual Creation live in an eternal *Blackness of Darknefs*, did not God lift up the Light of his Countenance upon it, brightening it with the Beams of his Truth, and chearing it with the Influences of his Favour. Earthly Objects may indeed swell and puff up the Mind with unsubstantial Blifs: But nothing can fill up every Void in the Soul, and satisfy the whole Compass of our Desires with the Fulness of solid and unmingled Happiness, but that supreme Good, that infinite Being, *who is above All, and through All, and in us All.*

Such Truths as these we are too apt to overlook in the Day of Prosperity; and therefore,

Illy, Adversity has it's peculiar Advantages, to bring us to a just Sense of God, and our Duty to Him.

For, *1st*, Adversity will make us, however unwilling, reflect and descend into ourselves.

When

On the Advantages of Affliction. 41

When we enjoy one uninterrupted Flow SERMON II.
of worldly Blifs, when we fail along a
smooth and unruffled Surface with easy
and gentle Gales; Reason, our Pilot, which
should sit vigilant at the Helm, is too often
lulled into a fatal Security. But Adversity
rouses the Mind from it's Indolence, puts
us upon Thinking closely, and turning our
Thoughts every Way. Those, who have
met with no Misfortunes to mortify that
Pride of Heart, which is the Growth of
Prosperity, say to themselves: *Come on,
let us enjoy the good Things that are present;
let us fill ourselves with costly Wine and
Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring
pass by us; let us crown ourselves with Rose
Buds, before they be withered.* Thus the
glittering Scenes of Life beget a thousand
gay Ideas, a swarm of fantastic Images,
which, like Insects, wanton and flutter in
the warm Sunshine of Prosperity; but dis-
appear, die, and are no more upon the
first Inclemency of the Season.

It is amazing, that Men, in the Fulness
of Health and Plenty, when every Thing
smiles around them, should shut out the
Consideration of that Being, to whom they
owe the Fulness of their Health and Plen-
ty;

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SERMON
II.

ty; like Groves in all the Freshness of their Verdure, with all their Leaves thick upon them, shutting out the Beams of that Sun, to which they are indebted for their chearful Verdure: Yet so it is. For what have the Majority of the Wealthy, the Mighty, and the Great, been doing in all Ages? Why just what they did in the Days of *Noah*: *They did eat, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded*; that is, the Diversions and Business of this Life engrossed their Attention; *till the Day that Noah entred into the Ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them All.* Just so Men do now, till Sickness confines them to their Bed, or some dire Misfortune checks their Career. Which makes *Jebsaphat's* Example more remarkable: *When God had established the Kingdom in his Hand, and he had Riches and Honour in Abundance; his Heart was lift up, not with Pride and Insolence, but IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.*

How thoughtless, how unreflecting upon their past Conduct were *Joseph's* Brethren, till *Joseph's* hard Usage gave them a Compunction of Mind, and a deep Sense of their former Sins? *And they said one to another:*

On the Advantages of Affliction. 43

another: *We are verily guilty concerning* SERMON II.
our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish
of his Soul, when he besought us, and we
would not hear: Therefore is this Distress
come upon us. It is the Remark of the
Prophet *Amos*, that *they, who lye upon Beds*
of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their
Couches, who chaunt to the Sound of the
Viol, who invent Instruments of Music, who
drink Wine in Bowls, are not grieved for
the Affliction of Joseph.

I would by no means recommend a cen-
sorious, sour Severity, which is perhaps as
odious in the Sight of God, as a thought-
less, fantastic Levity; and is certainly more
incurable. For a philosophical, superci-
lous Sullenness, which proceeds from *think-*
ing habitually in a *wrong* Channel, is a Vice
seldom amended: Because Thought, which
should cure the Distemper, confirms and
rivets it. But Faults arising from *Want* of
Thinking, a collected Way of Thinking
for some Time, will correct and set right.
Now Sickness, Pain and Trouble, the most
effectual and persuasive Teachers, will make
a Man feel what he is, a poor helpless Crea-
ture; recollect what he has been, and look
forward to what he shall be to all Eternity.

Little

Little do they think, who are inured to Ease and Delicacy, whose Affluence empowers them to do Good; how many Thousands are wearing out Life in a sad Variety of Pain; or are dying perhaps of Poverty and a broken Heart; at the same Instant that they are expending their Time and Fortune in a Round of Folly, Sin and Vanity, unconscious of each liberal, each tender Sentiment.

But Adversity quickens our Compassion, corrects that Levity, which is the Inlet to Vice; and begets a fixed Thoughtfulness and Sedateness, the Soil which Virtue loves: It takes off our Insensibility, breaks the Fierceness of our Nature, and softens us into Humanity. For when our Hearts are *like melted Wax*, they are most ductile, tender, and susceptible of humane Impressions. We are *acquainted with Grief*; and by feeling Misery and Pain, we learn to have a Fellow-Feeling for the Calamities of our Fellow-Creatures.

2dly, Adversity puts our Virtue to the Test, and proves the Sincerity of it.

It is *no great Virtue* for a Man to be honest, who possesses an ample Fortune; though it would be a *very great Crime* for him

On the Advantages of Affliction.

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II.

him not to be so. For what Temptations can he have to Dishonesty, who has the Discretion to extract and enjoy the Sweets of a great Estate, without damaging or hurting the Flower on which they grow? But *to hold fast to that which is good*, in the lowest Ebb of Fortune; to retain our Integrity and intrinsic Worth, when stripped of every Thing that we were worth besides, and surrounded with whatever is grievous, is the strongest Evidence that can be given of our Love of Goodness. Thousands have acted contrary to their Conscience, and, with a Behaviour as pitiable as their Circumstances, *crouched* beneath the *Pressure* of hard Fortune, to low and sordid Compliances; who, it is to be charitably hoped, would have stood upright and unbending without that galling Load upon them.

For how shall a Man possess his Soul in Patience, who has little or nothing besides to possess? Now he finds, that a little Merit, with a World of Suppleness, Dexterity and Address, may facilitate his Advancement; but great Merit, and a rigorous, unpliant Adherence to the Rules of Morality, is too often a Bar to it: That
the

SERMON
II.

the Way from low Fortune to Greatness, is up a *steep* and *craggy* Hill : To climb up it by a *strait* and *direct* Ascent, is almost impracticable : To reach the Summit of it, or even to rise to any Eminence, he must generally fall into *crooked* and *indirect* Paths, which have several artful *Turns* and *Windings*.

It is easy for him who has a Sufficiency of Fortune, and well-regulated Passions, to look upon a barren Superfluity of Wealth, without casting a wishful Look, or a passionate Side-Glance towards it ; to sit loose and *indifferent* to the World in one Sense, *viz.* To have no selfish and indirect Views ; and yet in another Sense to be a great *Lover* of it, by affectionately wishing, and vigorously promoting, the general Good of it. The great Difficulty is, to act and think in some Measure above the World, while Poverty exposes us to the Neglect and Contempt of it ; to scorn to build our Fortunes on the Ruins of our Probity ; to despise the little Injuries we receive, and to pity the little Men that do them ; little I mean in themselves, and in the Eye of Reason ; though they may be very great in the Eye of the World, and perhaps much greater in their own Eyes.

How

On the Advantages of Affliction. 47

How despicable therefore are those, who, SERMON
II. though flowing in Plenty, have lost a good Name, merely to gain a fine Title; have sacrificed the true Greatness of the Mind, for the Outside of Greatness, some external Mark of Distinction; and have ceased to be honourable, that they might be stiled so? How truly esteemable those, who have proved their *Love* of Virtue and Truth to be *stronger than Death*, by foregoing the Blandishments of Life, and encountering the Terrors of Death for the Sake of them?

Such were the primitive Martyrs, Men of whom this World was not worthy, and therefore worthy of a better. Such was (a Name above all Names) our blessed Saviour, who *left us an Example* of Suffering, *that we might follow his Steps*.

Had he appeared with all the Littleness of Greatness and Power, with which the *Jews* invest their Messiah; had he assumed a temporal Kingdom; had he *bound Kings in Chains, and Nobles in Links of Iron*; his Example would have been of little or no Use; or at least only to those who move in an higher Orb: Not to mention, how inconsistent such a Pattern would have been with a Religion, which teacheth us to wean

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our Affections from earthly Things. But by submitting to a lower Scene of Action, by *taking upon him the Form of a Servant*, by being content to be ennobled by himself, which is the truest Ennoblement; his Example is of more universal Influence. This gave him an Opportunity to exemplify several Virtues, which the Bulk of Mankind has every Day Occasion to practise: Such as Humility, Patience, Resignation to God, and Contentedness in the lowest Station. *Father, saith he, just before his Crucifixion, if it be possible, remove this Cup from me; nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done.* And just before his Death he cries out, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And again, Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.* Here are no unnatural Rants, no undistinguishing Glare of Eloquence, no high-flown Expressions, such as the Pride of Philosophy has dictated to it's Votaries: The Thoughts are great without being extravagant; easy without being low and groveling. As a *Man*, he wishes, if it were possible, the Removal of his Calamities; as a *good and great Man*, he resigns himself without Reserve to the Will of his Creator. He
affects

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affects no Insensibility of Pain ; he speaks SERMON II.
the genuine Language of human Nature, but of human Nature greatly strengthened by Grace and Reason, which may graft upon and improve, but never destroy Nature.

And indeed, through the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Life, there was nothing shewy or ostentatious ; nothing, that was fitter to *dazzle the Eyes* of the Beholders, than to *guide their Feet in the Way of Peace*. The social as well as solitary Virtues shone with gentle yet with sprightly Beams. Piety sat gracefully upon him, with an easy Greatness, with a sober Majesty, and without any frightening and forbidding Appearances.

3dly, Adversity is of Service to disengage our Minds from earthly Pursuits, and to *fix our Thoughts, where true Joys are to be found*.

God, says Solomon, has set the Days of Adversity over against those of Prosperity, that a Man should find nothing after Him, viz. after God to complain of, or to order for the better. The Meaning is, God hath so balanced and mixed Adversity and Prosperity together ; that a Man, upon a Re-

view of the whole, upon a full and impartial Estimate of Things, should have no just Grounds to arraign the Conduct of Providence; but shall find he has had more good Fortune than he deserved, and as much as was beneficial to him; and no more ill Fortune than was necessary to correct his Faults, moderate his Affections, and exercise his Virtues.

Accordingly, we have Instances of those, who living in a pompous Worthlessness, and thinking at that Time that *to morrow would be as to day, and more abundant*, would, in all Probability, have been utterly undone for ever; if they had not been almost undone here by some signal Calamity. A Reverse of Fortune has forced them upon a Course of Life and Train of Thinking, which they would scarce have fallen into of themselves. Being obliged to retire from the great World, they have, in Process of Time, regretted nothing so much, as that they did not retire sooner, to think strongly, apprehend clearly, and reason justly; to penetrate deeply to the Bottom of Things, and to look far to the End of them. And when the Retrospect upon the past has afforded them no Comfort, they have open-

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ed and brightened the Prospect before them.

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For Riches oft beget in us a Fondness for the present Scene of Things, and a Deadness of Affection to God and heavenly Things: But Afflictions set the Soul free, and leave it disencumbered in the Pursuit of Heaven. Convinced by melancholy Proof of the Insufficiency of worldly Things, we take Sanctuary in the Fulness of the divine Sufficiency. Finding ourselves disconsolate in a barren and dry Land, where no Water is; we desire those Rivers of Pleasure, which flow at God's Right Hand for evermore.

A Prayer is a natural Motion of the Soul to God in any deep Distress; it becomes then our necessary Refuge, even though it might not be our free Choice before: which proves, that Religion, however it may be stifled in Prosperity, is interwoven in our Frame. A Man greatly aggrieved by oppressive Power, without a Prospect of having his Grievances redressed below, cannot but make his humble, silent Appeal to the Great God of Heaven, as to the last Resort of Justice, *who helpeth them to Right, who suffer Wrong.* We cannot help look-

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ing up to that Being, *the Father of Mercies, and the God of Comforts, from whom our Help cometh*; when we see ourselves abandoned and forlorn, when we look around us, but there is none to save us from imminent Ruin.

Then, whatever inborn Vigour of Mind we may have, we fly to God and beg an additional Strength from Him to support us under our Calamities, Grace to turn them to our Advantage, and eternal Happiness to reward them. Then we chiefly value this Life, as it has a Connexion with a future, a Life in which we should be unwilling, were the Choice given us, to tread the same Round over, and to measure Time back again; and yet Man goes on, still deceived by past Pleasures, still depending on those to come; till his Days are run out to the very Dregs: Whereas the obvious Thought is: If so little Satisfaction is to be had, and so much Pain to be undergone in the Greenness and Verdure of Youth, *what shall be done in the dry Tree?*

To a Man *at Ease in his Possessions*, the Dread of Dissolution, which sometimes poisons all his Enjoyments, shall be often a greater and more painful Ill, than his Dissolution,

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olution, considered in itself; and *the Shadow of Death* shall be more formidably large than the Reality: But a Good Man in Distress could wish, if it were consistent with the Will of his Creator, *to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*: He wants to render unto God, *what is God's*, viz. his Soul, which bears that Image and Impress of the Deity, which it has been his Business to preserve bright and unsullied: He thinks it would not be worth his while to live a Moment here, if he were not to live for ever hereafter.

I have been led into this Train of Reflections by the Death of a Person, whom we all know, and to whom I have particular Obligations. The Loss of even an inoffensive Person, with whom we constantly travelled together in the common Road of Life, without any other Circumstance to endear his Memory, cannot but in some Measure affect an humane Heart. Every Place where he generally was, suggests the Idea of him: We miss him there, and scarce at first recollect, that he is now no more; but as soon as we do, that very Recollection brings a melancholy Thought across the Mind; till, by Degrees, the Im-

pression wears off, and the Idea of him is disjoined from that of the Place, which must know him no more. How much more then ought some of us here to be affected, who have lately been deprived of a very worthy and esteemable Acquaintance, right in his Principles, regular in his Practice, and easy and affable in his Conversation.

Frank, open and ingenuous by Nature, cautious and prudent by his Knowledge of the World, ever ready to oblige; he lived without a formed Design of displeasing any Body, and yet without the vain chimerical Hopes of pleasing every Body.

He was a very proper Person to have Recourse to upon any intricate Emergency. For he at once preserved the cool Judgment of a disinterested Person, and yet entered as heartily and thoroughly into the Affair, as if he had been personally interested in it; fruitful of Expedients, with the good Sense to fix upon that which was best, and most to the Purpose.

He had so established a Character for Punctuality, Fairness and Honesty, in his Business, that People loved to have to do with a Man of his unsuspected Veracity; above those indirect Arts, which a great

Soul

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Soul *despises*, and a good one *detests*; the little temporary Expedients of Men, who want to serve a present Exigency, and procure some short-lived Advantages, but have not Sense enough to consider the *remote Consequences* of an Action, and to think of the Prophet's Question, *What will ye do in the End thereof?* For certain it is, that Knavery cannot long be concealed, nor Honesty counterfeited; and *lying Lips are but for a Moment; but Truth is established for ever.* There was a Dignity in his Aspect, Weight in his Words, and an Openness and Simplicity in his Actions, which engaged Men's Esteem for him, and made them repose a firm Confidence in him. It seemed to be his Opinion, that in complicated Cases our second Thoughts were better than our first; and that we ought to deliberate long, before we proceed to Action: But that in plain Cases our first Sentiments, the Sentiments of genuine, untainted Nature, were better than our second; and that to deliberate, was only to endeavour to find out some specious Refinements and artful Glosses, by which we might, with much ado, reconcile those Practices to our Conscience, to which it was at first View

strongly abhorrent. He never therefore deviated from the plain High Road of Holiness into those crooked and intricate By-Paths, in which, where one has shortened his Way to Riches, hundreds have lost and bewildered themselves.

That he was an affectionate Husband to one of the best and tenderest of Wives, and a kind indulgent Master to his Servants, are confessed Parts of his Character; and yet these are the surest Tests of an habitual Good-Nature, and a prevailing Sweetness of Disposition.

Being bred a Scholar, he had a Capacity and Knowledge, but not a Mind and Spirit, above his Profession: For he assiduously applied himself to it, as if he had been by Nature and Education only fitted for that Sphere. Before his Retirement from Business and the World, he had an enlarged Conversation in it: But though he often kept Company with Men of loose Principles, he never departed from his own, which he had early imbibed, and thoroughly digested. For Men of this Stamp seldom make any lasting Impressions upon Persons of strong Sense, and a thoroughly good Disposition: The utmost they can do

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is to stagger *weak* Men, and to make those SERMON II. that are already in some Degree *bad*, much

worse. He was a constant Frequenter of the Church, during his Health; and, when his Illness confined him to his House, a constant Communicant at the three great Seasons, and received the Sacrament with that awful Composure of Behaviour, which bespoke a Mind recollected and attentive, and affected all about him with a correspondent Seriousness.

His Faults and Frailties were such as *all* Men are liable to: But his Perfections were the Attainments of *few* in Comparison; particularly the great Patience with which he bore the severe Trials which God laid upon him. He seemed to enjoy himself and his Friends under such afflictive Circumstances, as would have made most others a Burthen to themselves, and uneasy to every one that came near them, and was a signal Example that the *greatest* Advantage one Man can have above another in this Life, arises from the *Temper* and Disposition of the *Mind*; that *Temper*, which softens every Care, and improves every Blessing. For he seemed to have more true Peace of Mind under a long

[Compli-

are possess'd of in the Fulness of Health and Vigour ; who want they know not what, and are uneasy they know not why : And if at any time his Spirits were deprest by long-continued Pain, Conversation with an intimate Friend would break the Gloom that hung upon him, and brighten up his Soul. Indeed his Malady grew upon him to that Degree, that it was almost cruel to wish him a longer Continuance among us : All that his Friends could desire, was an easy Passage out of this World into a better, where *there shall be no Pain or Sorrow*. His Soul is now enlarged from that corruptible Body to which it was united ; and released from those Miseries, which, by Virtue of that Union, it underwent. How soon we, who *in the midst of Life are in Death*, may follow him, God only knows : Each Day brings us nearer to *Eternity* ; and it should be our main Endeavour, that each may bring us nearer to a *blessed Eternity*.

But, while we are in the Body, we must more or less struggle with Difficulties, and combat with Temptations. While we live, we must persevere, without slackening our Industry,

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Industry, to fight this good Fight. When SERMON

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we die, we have gained the decisive Victory; and when we come before the Throne of Grace, we shall receive a glorious Triumph; a Triumph indeed, where instead of the senseless Noise of an undistinguished and undistinguishing Populace; a numerous Choir of ennobled Spirits shall hail with joyful Acclamations their happy Fellow-Servant: While, to crown all, the great Judge pronounces the blessed Sentence: *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant! Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*



SERMON

STATION

SERMON III.

On Faith, Benevolence, &c.

Being a Farewel SERMON preached in
Twickenham-Chapel, June 20. 1742;
and published at the Request of the
Audience.



I TIMOTHY I. 19.

Holding Faith, and a good Conscience.

THIS being the last Time, that I ^{SERMON}
shall speak to you in the Capacity, which I now bear, of your ^{III.}
Preacher and Minister; I have chosen these
Words, the Advice of *St. Paul* to *Timothy*,
as containing the Sum and Substance of our
Duty. In discoursing upon which, I shall
throw together some few Thoughts;

Ist, Upon Faith;

II^{dly}, Upon a good Conscience;

III^{dly},

IIIly, Take my Leave of you, with a
 short Address to you.

The first is, that you would seriously consider the strong Evidences of your Faith; Evidences so strong that he would be deemed a Madman, who was not determined by much less in his secular Affairs. If any one should go about to disprove the Conquests of *Alexander*, he would be thought not to be in his sound Mind: And yet there are much stronger Proofs for the Reality of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, and particularly in the New Testament, than there are for the Victories of *Alexander*, or even for the Being of such a Man.

Let it no more stagger your Faith, that there are so great a Number of *Unbelievers*, than it ought to influence your Practice, that there are so great a Number of wicked Men. Besides, you may be deceived, by mistaking *second* Qualities for *first*. A Propensity to think out of the common Road, may be by no Means the *leading* Quality among those that are stiled *Unbelievers*: It may be only a *secondary* one, and subservient to a *primary* Passion, that of being in the *Fashion*. Those very Men, who now affect

affect to be thought Unbelievers, might, SERMON
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probably, if they had lived in the Times
of the Grand Rebellion, have set up for
Saints: Because a reputed Sanctity was as
much the Mode of that Age, as Infidelity
is now. There is a Torrent of Opinions
peculiar to almost every Age: Men of light
unbalanced Minds, like light Matter, are
borne down by the Current; and Men of
solid Sense do not always meet with the
Success which they deserve, in stemming
and opposing it. The Principles of Chri-
stianity may be out of Fashion: But what
they want in the Fashion, they make up in
Weight, Solidity, and intrinsic Worth.

For one, that has been made a Profelyte
to Deism, by Reading, Thinking and Stu-
dying, there are Multitudes, who become
so by Conversation with those, who have
no Way of keeping themselves in Counte-
nance, but by discountenancing Religion.
And what Wonder is it, that Persons should
be *laughed out* of Religion, who never *rea-
soned* themselves *into* it? A Man in his
younger Years must be well-disposed, and
of a serious thinking Turn, to converse at
large, and yet continue a Christian: Yet
if he be of a serious Turn, and impartially
weigh

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weigh the numerous Proofs for it, he cannot but continue a Christian. For Christianity has too many and strong Appearances of Truth, for any, who deliberately and unbiassedly attends to them, to believe it an Imposture. It has been *sifted as Wheat*: And the Consequence is, that some few trifling Considerations, which had been formerly alledged in Favour of it, have been set aside, *like the Chaff, which the Wind scattereth away from the Face of the Earth*; but it's solid and substantial Arguments, like the *good Seed*, remain firm, and will alway stand their Ground.

To reject Christianity, because of the Difficulties with which it's Doctrines are attended; is to reject it as *false* for that, which seems to be an Argument of it's *Truth*. I will explain myself immediately. Christianity, supposing it's Truth, is a Revelation from God.—A Revelation from God must contain something of the Nature, Will and Counsels of God, as far as they relate to us.—Now the Will, Counsels and Nature of an infinite Being, must be, in a great Measure, unsearchable to, and incomprehensible by, Beings of such a scanty Pittance of Understanding as we have.—

have.—That is, they must be encumbered with insuperable Difficulties.—To object Difficulties then against Christianity, is to make that an Argument against the Truth of Christianity; which Christianity, *supposing it's Truth*, must, in the Nature of the Thing, be attended with. The united Force of Unbelievers has never been able to invalidate the several Arguments that have been brought to prove the Truth of Revelation; and while these prove it to be true, Difficulties cannot alter the Nature of Things; they cannot make that to be false, for the Truth of which we have forcible Proofs.

Listen not therefore to the Suggestions of designing Men. Under a Pretence of banishing your Apprehensions of a future Judgment, they will only dash your Hopes, and weaken your Expectations of a blessed Immortality; alarming those very Apprehensions, which they promised to remove, by adding to your other Terrors, this *new* Fear, which will continually haunt you, a Fear, lest you have sinned in dismissing your first Persuasion for very slight and frivolous Reasons. There may be several, who have just Sense enough to see there

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are *Difficulties* in Christianity; but not Sense enough to see they are *but* Difficulties: And these may be confirmed Infidels, *meer Reeds shaken with the Wind*, with every Blast of vain Doctrine. But where there are no insuperable Prejudices of Education in the Case; take it for granted, that Men of cool Heads, who dare think Home, who dare follow Truth with the same Indifference, as a Traveller enquires after the best Road that leads to his Journey's End, do not think so differently in material Points as you may imagine. They may hang out false Colours; but, depend upon it, the utmost Length Men are capable of going, who are thoroughly willing and able to drive each Argument to an Head, is to have some Doubts and Scruples, which are preponderated by an exceeding Weight of Evidence on the other Side. Absolute infallible Certainty is in Heaven, and we are upon Earth; but there is such a Degree of moral Certainty, as is sufficient to overbalance all Doubts. We know every Objection against Christianity as well as they do; and there is not the least Shadow of a Demonstration against it: But the Reasons for it are so strong, that though they do

not amount to a strict Demonstration, they SERMON
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make near Approaches to it.

I know the Firmness of our Assent does not depend so much on *outward Evidences*, be they never so forcible, as on the *inward Frame* and Bent of the Mind. Yet I take it to be almost as impossible for a Man, supposing his Faculties to be good, and duly exercised, to be deceived *intirely* in a Point of Moment; as it is for him, when under the Influence of some criminal Passion, not to deceive himself in *Part*. The Case is the same in Relation to very material Errors, as it is in Regard to secret Vices. The latter may escape our Observation, as to any particular distinct explicit Knowledge of them: However, we have general confused indistinct Notices, that all is not right within, as to the Article of Sins in some Measure unsuspected; and this is the Reason, why we are averse to search out our Spirits, lest we should find that to be too true, upon a mature Examination, which we mistrusted upon a careless, transient Glance of Thought. Just so it is in Matters of Belief. Where there is a moral Certainty, any wrong Affection may so far blind even a thinking Man, that he shall not have a *thorough* and

determined Conviction of the Truth; but he cannot shut out or suppress the Evidences for it so entirely, as not to have a *general Distrust*, and an *implicit Suspicion*, that he is in the Wrong: Which general Distrust is the Cause, that he is so unwilling to look into a Book, which is wrote with great Strength of Reason on the other Side, lest he should let in the Enemy Truth to disturb his Repose.

There may be, however, some Exceptions to what is here laid down. Men may have something particular in their Temper: There is sometimes an unsuspected Wrongness of Thinking, which, because it does not discharge itself in Raving, escapes the Eye of common Observers; but yet shall leaven a Man's whole Way of Thinking: And it generally falls in with the reigning Bent of the Times. When the Nation was in a Ferment about Religion, and for what was called, a greater Purity in it, it struck in with the general Vogue of the Age, and vented itself in all the Extravagances of Fanaticism: But now, when Things have taken a different Turn, and Irreligion is the prevailing Mode; it has received a new Determination from thence.

Hence some are as distempered Bigots for ^{SERMON}
their No-Religion, or what makes near ^{III}

Approaches to none, as others were about a Century ago for a farther Reformation. Some Persons who have travelled early into Countries where Popery is established, have had Sense enough, in their younger Years, to see through the gross Impositions and Cheats, which are practised upon the Vulgar. But not being able to separate Religion itself from the undue Mixtures which were blended with it, have unhappily contracted an Aversion for all Religion in general. They have associated with the Idea of Religion all those numerous Tricks and Popperies, which have passed there under it's sacred Cover. And the Case of those, who by this Means, or by any other Means similar to this, have conceived an early Distaste for Religion, resembles theirs, who have contracted an Antipathy to some Meats or Liquors, however wholesom and nourishing, by Reason of some bitter and unpalatable Draughts or Ingredients being mixed with them: The disagreeable Idea always recurs, when they see them. This is certain, that an offensive Impression, which has been given us of Religion, Learning, or

any Thing else in our tender Years, before our Minds come to a Steadiness and Consistency; are like those Marks which are made upon the Body of an Animal in it's Mother's Womb; they are seldom or never erased, but we carry them with us to the Grave.

But whatever Allowances we may make for insuperable Prejudices, and invincible Ignorance, in this Case, and many others; it is a Mistake to think, that Deists are less easy of Belief, than the rest of Mankind. There may be a certain Stock of Faith, which we bring with us into the World; and as it has been observed of the *Affections*, that if they be withheld from their *natural* Gratifications, they will often discharge themselves on *improper* Objects: Just so, if Men do not place their *Faith* on *suitable* Objects, they will not cease to be Believers; they will *misplace* it on *unsuitable* ones; and whatever they want in a true Christian Faith, they will more than make up in believing strange Absurdities; of which numerous Instances might be given both in the past and present Times.

You may have bad Books industriously thrown in your Way; and you may have

an

an Imagination *apt to startle* at Difficulties SERMON
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new to you. But, if you have a Turn for

solid Thinking and Reasoning, *bring* your Mind *close* to the Difficulty, and make it take a *near* View of it on every Side; and you will find that what *startled* it at a Distance, was only some idle *Trifle*, which Fancy had *dressed up* in a *formidable* Shape. And if you have not, desire those, who have studied the Point, to turn to such Passages in Books already published as contain a sufficient Answer to it. For Infidelity can only go *round* and *round* the same Topics, in an eternal Circle, without advancing one Step further: It produces no *new* Forces; it only brings those again into the Field, which have been so often *baffled*, *maimed*, and *disabled*, that, in Pity to them, they ought to be dismissed, and discharged from any farther Service.

You may complain that you have not Capacities sufficient for such Things. Supposing your Abilities so very slender, as not to be able to perceive the Truth of an historical Fact well-attested; yet one Thing you may be sure of; that it is much better for the Good of the whole, that Mankind should abide by such a written Rule of

Faith and Practice, as the Christian is; than that they should be left every one, in *their* as well as high Life, to collect a Religion for themselves, just as their Ignorance, Passions and Prejudices should mislead them. You may see, that this Scheme, which is that of Infidelity, would be destructive of the general Happiness of the World: And you may conclude, that whatever Scheme would, upon the Foot of the Account, leave the World in a much worse State than it was before in Point of Happiness, must be disagreeable to his Will, who wishes the Happiness of the World; and therefore contrary to Truth. What better Wish could the best-natured Being, that ever was, form for the Benefit of the World; than that the Doctrines of Christianity, those strong Incentives to Virtue, should be universally believed; and it's Precepts universally practised?

Illy, From a right Faith I now proceed to what is, or ought to be, the Consequence of it, a good Life.

A good Life is not one solitary and single Virtue, however glaring; it is the Combination and Meeting together of all the moral

moral and spiritual Graces: Just as Light and Whiteness is not one single Colour and Ray; it is the Composition of all the Colours and Rays united and blended together.

Your first and leading Duty is Piety to God. And this takes in all religious Duties, whether moral or positive; whether we fully and clearly see the Reasons of them, or we see them dimly and indistinctly, or we do not see them at all; knowing this (enough for us to know) that an all-wise Being can enjoin no Duty, but for wise Ends and Purposes; and an all-good Being can command no Performance, but what is for our Good and Benefit.

Let not your Piety break out in sudden short interrupted Flashes, but let it shine on in one continued steady Day-light. Have not just Religion enough to make you uneasy; but enough to give you solid Satisfaction, and a well-grounded Assurance. Give God *all* you can; give him your Heart—for *that* is *all*. And then, instead of contenting yourself with thinking, how holy and charitable you would be, if you had such a Fortune, or were in such a Station; you will never be easy, till you are as holy and charitable as it is possible for you

you to be, in whatever Station you are, or
whatever Fortune you have.

But I have already discoursed often on this Subject : One Thing more however I beg Leave to mention. You are, most of you, regular Attendants on the Service of the Church : Take Care, that your Deportment out of Church, be correspondent with your Behaviour in it : Otherwise, you will do Religion more Disservice, than if you were it's open and avowed Enemies. For, pray observe : Though Piety be the most valuable Thing in itself, the Bulk of Mankind are not capable of forming fine *abstract* Ideas of it in *itself* ; they must consider it, if at all, as it *lies before* them in the *Lives and Conversation of Men reputedly Pious*. And when they see those who have that Character, laying Stress upon Trifles, as if the whole of Religion consisted in them, and neglecting Essentials ; when they see them prying into the Secrets of Families, or encouraging and listening to those that do so, addicted to Censoriousness and Superciliousness ; the little low despicable Notions, which they form of Persons professing Piety, they will unjustly annex to Piety itself, and hold it ever after cheap and contemptible.

2dly,

2dly, Let therefore your Piety to God, SERMON
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be joined with, what ought to be inseparable from it, Charity to Man.

By Charity, I do not mean only Alms-giving; for that is only one Branch of it, one outward Expression of this Duty; I mean the most liberal Sentiments and the most enlarged Affections towards all Mankind. A charitable Man will endeavour to see every Thing through the Mirror of Good-Nature, which mends and beautifies all Objects, without altering any: Like fine Painting, which, without deviating from Nature, adds new Touches and Graces to it; it does not change, but only embellish it; it does not give a mere Likeness, much less a woful Likeness, it gives an agreeable and advantageous one. Far from *surmising* Evil, where there is *none*; he will rather *think no Evil*, where there really *is*; judging it better to err through a good-natured Credulity, than through an undistinguishing Suspicion; because a good-natured Credulity will only expose him to some temporal Inconveniencies; but an undistinguishing Suspicion will beget in him a settled Uneasiness, Jealousy, Hatred, and the whole Train of black Passions, which will

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will render his Soul as dark as that Hell, into which they will at last irrecoverably sink him.

To descend to Particulars; 1st, A charitable Man will never hate any Body or Community of Men, provided there be nothing immoral in their Profession; however he may dislike some Individuals in it. Nothing is more unjust, though I am afraid, nothing is more usual; than, if we have had to do with some wicked Men of any Fraternity, to cry out, *they are all become abominable*. Now an undistinguishing Censure upon a whole Profession, for the Faults of some few particular Members, is generally a greater Crime; than any we can fix upon those few particular Members. Because it tends to bring an undeserved Discredit upon a whole Body of Men, and thereby to lessen their Usefulness. To commend a whole Body in the gross, is an Indication of a weak, undistinguishing Judgment; and to condemn it in the gross, of Uncharitableness: Human Nature was never so good, but there were several worthless Members in every Profession; and never so bad, but there were several of distinguished Worth in every Condition of Life.

Life. The Scholar despises the Man of Business, and the Man of Business the Scholar: Now, what estranges Men from each other, should, in the Reason of the Thing, mutually endear them: Because the general Good of the whole arises from the different Pursuits of the several Individuals: And if all Men were to go the same Way, and follow the same Track of Employment; it would cause a strange Embarrassment, the Road would be so much crouded, that none could get forward. Honour then *all Men*, even those of the meanest Occupations: Take in, with a comprehensive View, the whole Chain of the rational World, where, though the Links may be disproportioned in their Size, yet the least serves to strengthen and support the greatest, and both, by depending upon, and aiding each other, keep the whole Contexture from falling asunder.

2^{dly}, As you ought not to conceive a Distaste for any Man, or Body of Men, upon the Account of a different Profession; so neither should you, because they are of a different Persuasion, Sect, or Party.

Supposing yourself in the right; you pity *corporeal* Blindness; why should you
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not likewise compassionate, instead of being angry with, the Blindness of the *Understanding*, when it cannot discern certain religious Truths? I know no Reason but this, which resolves itself into Pride; that the *corporeally* blind *own* themselves to be so; but the blind in *Understanding* maintain, that *we* labour under that *Distemper*, and not *they*. Now we are not so thoroughly convinced, that our Understanding and Way of Thinking is perfectly right in all Points, as that we have the full Enjoyment of our Eye-sight: And this makes us so angry with the one, while we pity the other. Ensure your own Salvation as much as you can, but do not think hardly of those, who differ from you even in fundamental Points, much less consign them over to Damnation. Our blessed Saviour, who disapproved the Worship of the *Samaritans*, as appears from his Conversation with the *Samaritan* Woman at the Well, yet singles out, in his beautiful Parable, one of that Nation to do a generous Action to the wounded Traveller, on Purpose, one would think, to obviate this contracted Turn of Mind, and to recommend those to our Love, whose religious Notions we dislike.

dislike. Whether a good Man, who is a SERMON
III. Misbeliever in some Points, without any Faultiness or Irregularity of Will, will be damned for his *erroneous* Way of Thinking, may be a Question among some People; but I think it admits of none, that a Man will be damned for an *uncharitable* Way of Thinking.

3^{dly}, You must not pass a hard precipitate Censure upon a whole Nation or Country. *Can any Thing good come out of Nazareth?* was a low, confined, ungenerous Thought: Goodness is not *limited to*, or *excluded from*, any Place: The Good are *diffused* throughout all Nations, all Sects, all Persuasions, all Ranks and Orders of Men. True Charity ever dwells with a Largeness of Soul, which takes in all Mankind, sincerely wishing, that all, who are in any material Error, may embrace the Truth; and all, that embrace it, may hold a pure Faith in a pure Conscience. And I question whether a generous spirited Way of Thinking, a noble and exalted Ardor of Soul, with strong Passions, which sometimes transport a Man into Exorbitances, be not, upon the whole, much more commendable; than an insipid Regularity, a
flat

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flat Correctness of Life, which creeps on in one dull Tenor, without ever overflowing; with too little Spirit to reach any Heights in Virtue; too languid Passions to be guilty of any flagrant Vice: Just as the Critics have preferred the Sublime in Writing, with a great many Inaccuracies and Inequalities, to a middling Stile, though very faultless.

In short, true Charity is to detest nothing but Vice; and to despise nothing but contracted, illiberal Notions, which would confine God's Favour, and most certainly limit our Affections, within a narrow Circle. Form as amiable Sentiments as you can, of Nations, Communities of Men, and Individuals. If they are true, you do them only Justice; if false, though your Opinion does not alter their Nature, and make *them* lovely; *you yourself* are more lovely, for entertaining such Sentiments. When you *feel* the bright Warmth of a Temper thoroughly *good* in your own *Breast*, you will *see* something *good* in every one about you. It is a Mark of a Littleness of Spirit, to confine yourself to some minute Part of a Man's Character; a Man of generous, open, extended Views, will grasp the whole of it; without which he cannot pass

pass a right Judgment on any Part. He SERMON
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will not arraign a Man's general Conduct
for two or three particular Actions; as
knowing, that Man is a changeable Crea-
ture, and will not cease to be so; till he is
united to that Being, who is *the same ye-
sterday, to day, and for ever.* He strives
to outdo his *Friends* in good Offices, and
overcome his *Enemies* by them. He thinks
he then *receives* the greatest *Injury*, when
he *returns* and *revenges* one: For then he
is *overcome of Evil.* Is the Person young
who has injured him? He will reflect, that
Inexperience of the World, and a Warmth
of Constitution, may betray his unpractised
Years into several Inadvertencies, which a
more advanced Age, his own good Sense,
and the Advice of a judicious Friend, will
correct and rectify. Is he old? the Infir-
mities of Age, and Want of Health, may
have set an Edge upon his Spirits, and made
him *speak unadvisedly with his Lips.* Is he
weak and ignorant? he considers, that it is
a Duty incumbent upon the wise to bear
with those that are not so. *Ye suffer Fools*
gladly, says St. Paul, seeing ye yourselves
are wise. And next to the wishing all
Mankind his Friends, he wishes that such

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only were his Adversaries. In short, he judges of himself, as far as he can, with the strict Rigor of Justice; but of others, with all the Softenings of Humanity.

From charitable and benevolent Thoughts, the Transition is unavoidable to charitable Actions. For wherever there is an inexhaustible Fund of Goodness at the Heart, it will, under all the Disadvantages of Circumstances, exert itself in Acts of substantial Kindness. He, that is substantially good, will be doing good. The Man, that has a hearty determinate Will to be charitable, will seldom put Men off with the mere Will for the Deed. For a sincere Desire to do Good implies some Uneasiness, till the Thing be done: And Uneasiness sets the Mind at work, and puts it upon the Stretch to find out a thousand Ways and Means of obliging, which will ever escape the Unconcerned, the Indifferent, and the Unfeeling.

The most proper Objects of your Bounty are the Neccessitous. Give the same Sum of Money, which you bestow on a Person in tolerable Circumstances, to one in extreme Poverty; and observe, what a wide Disproportion of Happiness is produced.

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In the latter Case it is like giving a Cordial to a fainting Person; in the former it is like giving Wine to him, who has already quenched his Thirst. *Mercy is seasonable in Time of Affliction, like Clouds of Rain in the Time of Drought.*

And among the Variety of necessitous Objects, none have a better Title to our Compassion, than those, who, after having tasted the Sweets of Plenty, are, by some undeserved Calamity, obliged, without some charitable Relief, to drag out the Remainder of Life in Misery and Woe; who little thought they should ask their daily Bread of any but of God; who, after a Life led in Affluence, *cannot dig, and are ashamed to beg.* And they are to be relieved in such an endearing Manner, with such a Beauty of Holiness, that, at the same Time that their Wants are supplied, their Confusion of Face may be prevented.

There is not an Instance of this Kind in History so affecting, as that beautiful one of Boaz to Ruth. He knew her Family, and how she was reduced to the lowest Ebb: When therefore she begged Leave to glean in his Fields, he ordered his Reapers to let fall several Handfuls, with a seeming Care-

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lessness; but really with a set Design, that she might gather them up without being ashamed. Thus did he form an artful Scheme, that *he* might give, without the *Vanity* and *Ostentation* of giving; and *she* receive, without the *Shame* and *Confusion* of making Acknowledgments. Take the History in the Words of Scripture, as it is recorded in the Book of *Ruth*. *And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young Men, saying; Let her glean even among the Sheaves, and rebuke her not; and let fall also some of the Handfuls of Purpose, and leave them that she may glean them, and reproach her not.* This was not only doing a good Action; it was doing it likewise with a good Grace.

It is not enough we do no Harm; that we be negatively good; we must do Good, positive Good, if we would enter into Life. When it would have been as good for the World, if such a Man had never lived; it would perhaps have been better for him, if he had never been born. A scanty Fortune may limit your *Benevolence*, and confine it chiefly to the Circle of your *Domestics*, *Relations* and *Neighbours*; but let your *Benevolence* extend as far as Thought

can travel, to the utmost Bounds of the World: Just as it may be only in your Power to beautify the Spot of Ground that lyes near and close to you; but you could wish, that, as far as your Eye can reach, the whole Prospect before you was chearful, that every Thing disagreeable was removed, and every Thing beautiful made more so.

I have dwelt so long upon this last Virtue, that I have not Time to discourse upon the rest. One Duty, however, I shall just touch upon, which will engage us to Performance of all the rest; and that is, frequent Self-Examination, or Self-Reflection.

We need not look far to meet with Persons who, though they have a competent Knowledge of the World, *know not what manner of Spirit they are of*; condemning the Want of Charity in others with all the Acrimony, Fierceness and Uncharitableness imaginable; censuring People for the Defect of Candour and a Sweetness of Disposition, with that merciless Keenness and Eagerness of Spirit, which shews them to be, whatever others are, in the very *Gall of Bitterness*. Now the Use of such an Observation, is not so much to arraign them,

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as to suspect yourself. For he never knew himself rightly, who never suspected himself. We seldom have that *Charity* which covers a *Multitude of Faults* in our Neighbours; and we much seldomer want that *Self-Love* which covers a *Multitude of Faults* in ourselves. The Truth is, the Bulk of Mankind do not reflect upon what they do. There could not be so many unkind Things said or done, and so many kind ones omitted by those, who are not void of a Sense of Religion; if they took a Survey of every Thing that passed. What is indeed *notorious, extraordinary, and out of the common Road* in our Conduct, will engage our Attention: For what is notorious and glaring, forces itself upon our Observation: But upon what is *common, ordinary, and frequent*, in our Intercourse with one another, we *seldom reflect* at all, or at least very transiently. *Single Acts* of Sin may be owing to some violent *Sally of Passion*; but a continued *Course* of Sinning, in any one Instance, must be owing to *Self-Deceit*, occasioned by Want of *Self-Reflection*. For a Man cannot constantly allow himself in the Practice of what he constantly condemns. Without *Self-Reflection*

a Man

a Man may have every Vice under the Sun, ^{SERMON} without knowing he has any, provided he ^{III} has it not in a *high* Degree.

Consider not what the World thinks of such a Crime, but what it is in itself. For the World, in Matters of Opinion, is sway-
ed more by Authority than Argument; in Matters of Practice, by Example than Rule; and in few Things is governed by pure Reason only. Are you as apprehensive of a Mistake, as cautious not to take wrong Measures, as vigilant and circumspect in your grand Concernment, that of your eternal Welfare; as you would be in Cases on which your Life and Fortune depended? If you are, you will seldom act amiss: If you are not, you shew that a worldly Temper prevails more with you, than the Hopes of God's Favour, and the Desire of Salvation. Many excellent Books are written, many weekly Lectures are continually sounding in our Ears, with all the Strength of Reasoning, and Beauty of Eloquence, to persuade us to—What? one would think it should be something *seemingly hurtful* and *disadvantageous* to us. No, no such Thing. It is only to persuade us, what, one would think, is no difficult Matter, and yet is the

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most difficult of all, that we would not make *ourselves eternally miserable*, that we would endeavour after *Eternal Happiness*. For one, that perishes for Want of knowing his Duty, there are Numbers, who are lost for ever, for Want of seriously considering it, and laying it to Heart. But I am persuaded better Things of you, my Brethren; you will reflect, that if there be not another World, there is scarce any Thing worth Living for here; and if there be, our main Concern in *This*, is to fit ourselves for *That*.

But this brings me, *Hidly*, and *lastly*, To conclude with a short Address to you.

It signifies little, what Notions, a Person so obscure and undistinguished as I am, entertain. But since several Persons have been, without just Grounds, suspected of believing differently from what they profess, and to have an inward Doctrine, which they reserve to themselves, or communicate only to some few select Friends; I here declare, in the Presence of God, that I am fully persuaded of the Truth of Christianity, and the important Doctrines thereof, which I have, during the Space of nine Years, oft inculcated

inculcated to you; that I chuse to live, and hope to die in that Persuasion; that, after having read the most considerable Books that have been wrote against it, I do not know any Objection, but what has received repeated and satisfactory Answers. A thorough Christian in Principle, I wish I were as good a one in my Practice; and then I should, in some Measure, deserve that Approbation, with which you have honoured me.

I heartily thank you, that you have candidly overlooked my numerous Defects, kindly accepted my well-meant Endeavours to serve you, both from the Desk and from the Pulpit; and, what is more, generously encouraged them. And, to your other Obligations, which you have conferred on me, be pleased to add this, which will be the greatest Obligation of all, viz. to make Me, in some Degree, instrumental to your Salvation, by deliberately weighing what I have laid down.

They are the last Words of a departing, though not a dying Friend; and let them therefore make a suitable Impression. Quit not your Religion, your Trust in God, your Virtue, for any Pleasure or Profit, which
this

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this World can give, for the World itself. For all the Profit and Pleasure this World can give, this World itself may shortly be nothing to you : But Religion and Virtue will make you happy, when *Life's idle Employments*, and it's idler Follies, when the World, when Time shall be no more, False Friends will forsake you, and true Friends may either leave you through necessary Avocations, or they may be divided from you by Death : False Friends will *stand as far off* in the Day of Trouble, and even true Friends can, in some Cases, *stand only looking upon* your Misery, afflicted indeed in all your Affliction, but without any Power to ease your Calamities : But God is a present Friend, infinitely powerful and good, in all Cases, at all Times, in all Places; He is able to hear us, wheresoever dispersed; and to relieve us, howsoever distressed : Almost every Thing may separate us from other Friends; But *neither Life nor Death, nor Principalities, nor Powers*, nothing but Sin, can separate us from Him, and the blessed Influences of his Presence.

Some there *have* been here, and some there *are* here, to whom I am in a parti-

cular Manner indebted; from whom I have received Obligations much greater than my Expectations, and only not so great as their enlarged Souls and generous Inclinations to do me Good.—Some, of whom almost every one speaks well; and few or none can speak so well as they deserve. It is a Pleasure even to be obliged to Persons of their Turn, *who give liberally, and upbraid not*; a Pleasure only not so affecting as that (which is beyond my Abilities) of obliging them.

Injuries I do not remember, that I have received any from any of this Place: And for whatever Kindnesses you have done me, may God reward you sevenfold into your Bosom. And I do not question but he will reward you: For they were designed to cherish and countenance Worth and Learning; though bestowed on me. My Relation to you, as a Pastor and Teacher, is now upon the Point of expiring; but there is one Relation, which will always subsist, and that is, of your affectionate and sincere Wellwisher: Whatever Distance of Place may be between us, I shall rejoice to hear of any Good that befalls you, and be heartily sorry for any Disaster that affects you.

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you. My Prayers, my best Wishes (alas! what can I say or do more?) shall always be yours: For I am still yours sincerely in all good and Christian Offices.

Finally, Farewel, my Brethren; To God's Grace I commend you. May he grant you everlasting Welfare, and as much Health and temporal Prosperity as is consistent with your everlasting Welfare! May your Souls, while you live, improve in every Christian Grace; and when ye die, may they be presented without a Spot before the Throne of Grace! May God protect you with his Power, guide you with his Counsel through the several Stages of Life, and after that receive you into Glory!



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SERMON IV.

The Nature and Duration of future Punishments considered; - and the Goodness of God fully vindicated; as to that Article against the principal Objections of some late Writers.



MATTHEW XXVI. 24.

It had been good for that Man, if he had not been born.

THESE Words are spoken of *Judas Iscariot*, but they are applicable to every unrelenting Criminal; and the Sense of them is, Whoever lives abandoned, and dies impenitent, shall find his Miseries in the whole Extent of his Being to overbalance the Enjoyments he has had so far, that it had been happy for him not to have been at all; it being better not to be at all, than to be so miserable as he shall

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shall be: Or, in other Words, Annihilation, though not a Blessing in itself, is so, comparatively with the Torments which he shall endure.

This is the plain express authentic Declaration of no less a Person, than our blessed Saviour; and it seems to overthrow the Opinion of *Origen*, who imagined, that the Damned should be admitted to everlasting Happiness after a determined Period of Woe. For then it could not have been said with any Truth, that the Sum of their Miseries should exceed their Pleasures, since an eternal Happiness would outweigh any finite Torments. Annihilation would not have been, in the true Estimate of Things, a Blessing to those, who were certain of an exceeding and everlasting Weight of Glory. It would be good for that Man to be born, who should some time or other be happy for ever.

In the Prosecution of this Subject I propose,

Ist, To consider the Duration of future Punishments:

II^{dly}, To set forth the Nature of them:

III^{dly}, To make some practical Inferences:

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of future Punishments considered. 95

As to the 1st, viz. The Duration of fu- SERMON
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ture Punishments.

When God shall set forth, before the united Assembly of Men and Angels, the Harmony and Consistency of his Providence, from the first Birth of Time to it's last Period; it is to be humbly hoped, that merciful Abatements will be made for unavoidable Temptations, to which Men have been exposed by their Situation in Life; for the Want of a regular and virtuous Education, &c. And perhaps some Part of what is called *moral* Evil, may be, in the Eye of him, who *knoweth whereof we are made*, nothing but *natural* Evil; as owing to the native Impetuosity of some Men's original Complexions, and to the unactive Coldness of other Men's natural Tempers, which, whether they could wholly get the better of, God only knows. It may be likewise presumed, that the Number of the Damned will bear no more Proportion to that of the Blessed; than a Workhouse or a Prison does to the whole Extent of a large Kingdom.

But whatever gracious Allowances may be made, it is an express Scripture Doctrine, that the Wicked *shall go away into everlasting*

Let us suppose, that Mankind were to live here for ever: Let us suppose, that some of them were become abandoned and *incorrigibly* bad: Would it be any unjustifiable Severity to confine Them for ever in Prison, that they might not seduce or annoy the rest of the Creation; or even to inflict positive Punishments upon them, in their Confinement, adequate to their Offences, in Order to deter others? It is only therefore to suppose, that the Soul is in it's own Nature designed for an immortal Duration; that those, who are consigned to everlasting Misery, are such as by a continued Course of Sinning have so disabled all the Powers of the Soul, that it is morally impossible for them, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to cease from Sinning; And then if it be *no Injustice*, as undoubtedly it is not, that *every Sinner* should be a *Sufferer*; there can be no Injustice, that every *habitual, eternal Sinner*, should be an *eternal Sufferer*.

This Consideration, I think, takes off the Force of the Objection, *viz.* That there is no Proportion between temporary Crimes, and

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and eternal Punishments. But, since some ^{SERMON}
have laid great Stress upon it, I shall con- ^{IV.}
sider it further.

1st, Let it be considered, that though Crimes be temporary, with Respect to the Time in which they are committed; yet the Defilement and Habit contracted by a Repetition of Crimes is, if we die in a State of Impenitence, eternal. And as eternal ill Habits are the Source of eternal Torments; it will follow that the Impenitent have entailed upon themselves everlasting Misery. If, when Death has closed the Scene, there be no Aftergame to play; if all Overtures of Grace then cease; if Vice be stamped upon the Soul in indelible Characters; if *he that is filthy, must be filthy still*; then it is an undeniable Consequence, that he, who can never cease to be wicked, can never cease to be miserable. The veteran Sinner is steeled against all Impressions, and the Miser does not cease to love this World *with all his Soul, and with all his Strength*, even when he stands just upon the Verge of another. How often have we seen Men that, however inconsistent in every Thing else, have been very consistent in obeying one ruling,

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habitual Passion from first to last? Nay, we have surprizing Instances upon Record, besides that of a dying Miser, that even at the Close of Life, the grand and important Crisis, that is to determine a Man's Happiness or Misery; even then this ruling Passion would bear no Rival, no Competitor, near the Throne. Even then, like a domineering Favourite, who has long maintained the Ascendant; it would not, for Fear of being supplanted, admit any Thing to his Death-Bed, but what countenanced it's Interests, and was subservient to it's Orders. What our Saviour said to St. Peter, may be applied to an old habitual Sinner. *When thou wast young, thou girdedst thy self, and went whither thou wouldst; but when thou art old, another shall bind thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.* His Sins shall bind him, and carry him into Captivity. He will be apt to think, if he thinks at all to the Purpose; Why had I not the same Sentiments when young, as I have now? or why have I not now the same vigorous Strength, which I had then, to break my Bonds asunder?

Thus often in *this* World Habits seem to be incorporated into the Soul, and to be

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as it were Parts of our Selves: And if we SERMON
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carry our Enquiries farther, with the Light of Revelation in our Hands, we shall discover, that they are for ever rooted in the Mind in the next World. St. Paul, in the xiiith Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, discourses upon Charity, not as an *occasional Act*, but as a ruling, *standing Principle*. *If I give*, says he, *all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: i. e. Though I should practise some occasional Acts of Charity, however great; yet unless it be a settled Principle, it will be of no Avail. Well, what becomes of this habitual Charity? *Charity never faileth; but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away.* That is, Prophecies, Languages, and our imperfect Knowledge, which is but Ignorance in Comparison, shall end with this World: But the Habit of Charity shall remain beyond this transitory Scene of Things, and accompany the Mind into Heaven, and there remain with it to all Eternity; as immortal as the Soul, and as extensive as the Creation. Now if good

Habits shall follow their Possessors into another World, and there abide with them; then ill Habits will by Parity of Reason do so too.

This appears farther from the Case of those Angels, which *kept not their first Estate*. Could any Thing have reduced those accursed Spirits to a State of Submission to their Maker; one would have thought, the Fruitlessness of their former Attempt, the severe Vengeance they already felt, and the Dread of a much severer that hung over them, if they persisted in their Wickedness; and the Hopes of mitigating their Doom, if they desisted; might at least have made them passively obedient: But though they *believe and tremble*, yet still they go on to act contrary to the Conviction of their own Minds; still they go *about seeking whom they may devour*; still they proceed in a State of Hostility to their Creator: So steadfast is Malice, so unconquerable is Pride. And this will be the Case of the Damned. For as the Good are to be as the Angels of God; the Bad will be as the Angels of Darkness.

Whatever inborn Freedom of Mind we might have; an inbred, habitual Slavery

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to depraved Affections, will, in Process of ^{SERMON}
Time, destroy it: The Abilities may be ^{IV.}
cramped, and the Powers of the Soul, as
well as the Organs of the Body, so far
maimed, as to be incapable of answering
those valuable Purposes, for which they
were originally designed. Besides, though
we may endeavour to get rid of those *out-*
ward Calamities, which are generally *for-*
ced upon us, in Opposition to our strongest
Inclinations; we seldom make it heartily
our Business to remove those *inward* Mise-
ries, which we *voluntarily bring upon our-*
selves. Though we feel ourselves unhap-
py; yet as they are our own *Choice*, we
applaud and *justify* ourselves in it, through
the unrelenting Stubbornness of a corrupt
Will. Thus the Jealous, the Melancholy,
the Envious, the Revengeful, dwell upon
every Thing that may foment and heighten
their respective Passions, whatever Torments
they may labour under from them; and
shut out each Consideration that may make
against them. A Man cannot practise Vir-
tue, without effectually willing it: And
how can he effectually will that, to which
his Will, by a long uninterrupted Attach-
ment to Vice, is utterly averse? A long

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Continuance in vicious Pleasures is to the Soul, what iron Chains are to the Body of him, who has lain long in them: The Chains may be struck off; but the Canker and Rust, if they have eaten into the Flesh, will remain, and may disable him ever after. Just so worldly Pleasures may cease with this World; but the Pollution and gross Conceptions, which they leave behind, may continue to obstruct the Freedom of the Soul, and destroy it's native Energy *. Now when the whole Bent of the Soul stands the wrong Way, when all our Desires are rivetted to vicious Objects; it is no hard Matter to foresee, that Misery, eternal Misery, must be the unavoidable Result.

Now where can be the Injustice, that God should suffer those Evils to take Place, which a Man has brought upon himself, by counteracting the Will of God? Where can be the Injustice, that those should be for ever excluded from Heaven, who, by a viciated Relish, have disqualified them-

* Qui in compedibus corporis semper fuerunt, etiam cum soluti sunt, tardius ingrediuntur; ut hi, qui ferro vincti multos annos fuerunt. *Ciceronis Tusculanae Disputationes*: Pag. 66. Editio Davis.

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selves for heavenly Bliss? As Man was the Creature of God's Hands, he was enabled and designed to be a Partaker of Happiness, and a Sharer of a blessed Immortality with himself: But as he is an habitual Sinner, and in that Respect the Creature of his own Hands, he has made himself eternally miserable, by those Habits, which are the Foundation of Hell.

So far, perhaps, you may be willing to allow, there is no Colour of Injustice: But this, you will say, does not account for the Perpetuity of *positive* Punishments for temporary Crimes. To which I answer, that even the Threats of eternal *positive* Penalties are not the *rigorous* Decrees of *mere* Will and Pleasure; they are so many *kindly* Forewarnings of the *necessary* Effects of a rooted Aversion to Goodness. For it may be *necessary* to secure the Happiness of the Blessed, that, though the Good and Bad, like the Wheat and Tares, are blended together here; they should, at the End of the World, be finally *severed* the one from the other. It may be *necessary*, that if *every* Region of Joy and Comfort throughout the Creation be peopled with *unoffending* Beings; the desperately

Wicked should be thrust down (which is a positive Punishment) into Places, where no Joy and Comfort dwells, and there for ever imprisoned; that their Rancour and Malice might prey upon themselves, or be discharged upon their Fellow-Criminals, which, if let loose, might disturb the innocent Part of the World. The divine Sanctions, you see then, are not the arbitrary Impositions of sovereign Power; they are the genuine Result of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which, in Pity to the Universe, has enacted them, that the whole may receive no Detriment. And whatever other positive Punishments may be superadded; they will be exactly adjusted to the Demerits of each Offender. The Scripture expressly declares, that the Wicked will be beaten with fewer or more Stripes, in Proportion to the different Degrees of their Wickedness.

2dly, Let those, who insist so much upon it, that the Punishment is disproportioned to the Crime; reflect, whether they do not consider Sin in *one* View, either as to the *Fact abstractedly*, or as to the *Time* which the Perpetration of the Fact takes up; without considering it in *all Views*,
and

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and in all it's *Consequences*; which yet is the only Way to form a true Judgment of the Malignity of it. For the Punishment is not disproportioned to Sin, habitual Sin, if considered with all it's numerous Train of ill *Consequences*; the *Consequences* being such, that if unrestrained it would soon involve the whole World in one promiscuous Ruin and Desolation. It is true, one Man cannot do all this Mischief. But then one Man, who, for Instance, acts unjustly, contributes his Part to the Introduction of universal Disorder and Misery. If all should act as unjustly as himself, (and all have as much Right as any one Man) the Foundations of the moral World would be quite out of Course. Sin then deserves the *greatest Evil*; because it is opposite to the *greatest Good*; the universal Interest of the World.

To explain this by a familiar Instance, one Person robs another of a small Sum of Money; he is taken and suffers Death for the Fact: Now what Proportion is there between the Punishment and the Crime; between depriving a Man of *what* he perhaps could very well *spare*, and depriving the Person that did it of his *Life*, of his
all

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all in this World? None at all, if we consider the Crime in this *Light only*: But if we view it in *all it's Tendencies*, then the Crime is adequate to the Punishment; since it tends to render Property, and what is valuable in this Life, precarious, and to subvert the Peace of Society.

We know not, we cannot know, how far the Consequences of any one Sin may extend, how far the Influence of our Behaviour may affect all that lye within the Sphere of our Activity, those beneath us, and about us, our Domesticks, Relations, and Neighbours. And these again may spread the Contagion farther. Those that are vicious in a less Degree, however they may blame the Corruption of the World in general, are accessary to that very Corruption. It is here as in a Battle: Every Person who fled, is apt to shift off the Blame from himself, and to lay it upon his Fellow-Soldiers: But if each Person who gave Way had stood his Ground; what was a general Rout, would have been a complete Victory.

We may harangue as long as we please upon God's Benevolence. But no Arguments can be drawn from it to soften the seeming Rigour of the divine Sanctions. For
universal

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universal Benevolence must consult the Good ^{SERMON}
of the whole; which can never be done by ^{IV.}
abating the Penalties threatened to Vice;
and much less by removing all Apprehensions of suffering hereafter, and consequently emboldening Wickedness; but by awakening *careless* Sinners, and striking a Terror into *determined* Offenders. Whatever Sanctions are most effectual to compass this End, must be most agreeable to the Goodness of the divine Legislator, who cannot promote the Happiness of the whole, without securing the Observance of his Laws. If to *annex* such *Penalties* be for the *Good* of the *whole*; then what is for the *Good* of the *whole*, cannot be Injustice to any *particular* Person; since the *Good* of each *particular* Person is naturally and *originally* wrapt up in, and connected with, *that* of the *whole*. And there is a *previous Obligation* upon every one that comes into the World, either to *do* those *Duties*, or *submit* to those *Penalties*, which preserve or promote the *general Happiness*, with which *his own* was *primarily interwoven*. God would have enforced our Obedience to Him with *less* Penalties, if *less* had been *sufficient*. But it is plain, that *less* Punishments would
not

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not have answered the End; since even those, that he has denounced, do not, in many Cases, check the Growth of Vice, and awe a wicked World into a Compliance with his Will.

It is a Mistake therefore, and a dangerous one too, to admit, as some late Writers have done, of no penal Evils in the next World, but what terminate in the *Benefit* of the Sufferer, and are for the *Amendment* of the immoral Agent. Upon that Supposition, there would be *no Hell* properly speaking; there would only be a *Purgatory*: And the *abandoned* and *incurably* bad, who merit the *greatest* Severity, would escape with absolute *Impunity*; because *no Punishment* could produce an *Amendment* in them. Besides, all Punishments, which come from God, have not even in *this* Life been intended for the *Reformation* of the Criminal; some of them have been for the utter *Excision* and *Extirpation* of the irreclaimable, when once they have *filled up the Measure of their Iniquities*: Such were the Deluge, and the unprecedented Destruction of *Jerusalem*, not to mention many other Instances.

Some

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Some there are, who take Shelter in SERMON
IV. the Thoughts of Annihilation, and hope, or pretend to hope, that God will uncreate the Soul, and deprive it of Being. And is Annihilation then their only Hope? A sad gloomy Hope, and an horrid Consolation! To be as if they had never been, devoid of Consciousness, Sense and Motion, to have all those busy Workings of the Mind, all those active Thoughts, which wander through this World, and lose themselves agreeably in the next, lost and swallowed up for ever in utter Extinction of Being; is this their only Resource? this, at which Nature, which always struggles hard for Self-Preservation, starts back with Horror? Yet, alas! they are even cut off from this dreadful, this, I had almost said, desperate Hope. For if Annihilation be the only Punishment which shall be inflicted on Sinners; then all Sinners, however unequal their Crimes may be, would be equally punished. If all were alike to be deprived of Being, God would make no Distinction, where there is a very material Difference, between the greatest and the least of Sinners.

Farther,

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Farther, the Soul is an uncompounded, immaterial Being, and therefore not corruptible as Matter is. Now if God has created the Soul in it's Nature immortal; then he cannot uncreate, or render it mortal, without acting contrary to the fixed and stated Laws of Nature: But God never acts contrary to his stated Laws, except upon some extraordinary Emergency. Well then, where is the extraordinary Occasion, that the Deity should supersede his own Laws, and put forth an immediate Act of Almighty Power, to reduce those Souls to nothing, which he had empowered to subsist for ever? How can it be expected, that He, who never annihilates the *least* Particle of *Matter*, the least insignificant Atom, should annihilate a *spiritual* Substance? Why a Set of obstinately rebellious Creatures have plunged themselves into Misery, by wilfully, deliberately, and frequently breaking the Laws of *Morality*: And do they expect, that God will prevent that Misery, by breaking through the Laws of Nature, which he has established upon the maturest Wisdom for the Good of the whole?

Yes,

of future Punishments considered. IIII

Yes, say the Objectors: For he does not SERMON
IV.
love to inflict *useless* and *unavailing* Misery upon his Creatures: And it is asked, what Use the Punishment of these unhappy Objects can be of? To which I answer, that we, whose Judgments are very shallow, must not pretend to arraign his Proceedings, which are *like the great Deep*. This we may take for granted, that *no Evil* is suffered to continue in the Creation, but to prevent or avoid a *greater*. And the Continuance of these Beings in their wretched Existence may be of Advantage to let the *World* in *general* know the deplorable Consequences of an audacious Perseverance in a wilful Rebellion to their Creator, and to confirm the *Blessed* in *particular* in their Happiness. For the Blessed in Heaven are endowed with Freedom of Will. We know indeed, because God hath promised it; that, notwithstanding this Freedom of Will, they will never fall from that blissful State. But whether the Reflection on the Punishment of the Wicked may not be one considerable Means, among others, to keep them invariably firm in an uninterrupted Practice of Goodness, and consequently in an uninterrupted Enjoyment of Happiness;
3 this,

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this, I presume, we cannot determine. In God's *House*, the World, *there are many Mansions*; and Variety of Beings may still continue to people the Variety of Apartments in the Universe, after this Earth is dissolved. Perhaps, as the Fall of the Angels is revealed to us; so these unhappy Sufferers may serve to give awakening Notices to others, who inhabit some other Part of the Creation, lest they also fall into the same State of Condemnation. Be that as it will; God has a thousand Ways of bringing Good, general Good, out of partial Evil, and making the Punishment of the Bad, as well as Happiness of the Good, terminate in his own Glory.

This may serve as an Answer to those, who ask, why God would produce into the World Beings, whom he foresaw would be eternally miserable? The Reply is obvious. Why did he produce into the World Beings, that he foresaw would be exposed here to innumerable Misfortunes? Why did he permit, what he could not but foresee, temporal Evils; such as Volcanos, Earthquakes, Famines, Plagues, &c. But these *temporary Evils*, you will say, are productive of some *greater temporary Good*. Well;

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Well; if God may permit a *temporary Evil*; SERMON
IV. which he foresaw, to take Place, because productive of a *greater temporary Good*; why may he not permit an *eternal Evil*, which he foresaw, to take Place, because productive of an *eternal Good*? Or will these Persons demonstrate, that no eternal Good can result by God's infinite Wisdom, from an eternal Evil? But there is a wide Difference between temporary and eternal Evils: It is granted: Yet the same Principle, which vindicates God's Ways with Men, as to *temporary Curses*, acquits him likewise as to suffering *eternal Evils*, viz: That from both he can draw a much *greater Good*, and cause what is Evil *respectively* to a *few*, to be absolutely Good upon the *whole*.

Knowing the Terror of the Lord, says St. Paul, *we persuade Men*. Yet some very worthy Persons, misled, I conceive, by an Excess of Good-Nature, have weakened, instead of alarming, the Terrors of the Wicked. Those good Men, who oppose this Doctrine, may have to do with others that are not so; and one would be glad to know, where they *would*, or indeed where they *can* stop. If *eternal Punish-*

ments be thought excessive by them, will not others remonstrate against a Punishment of a *thousand* Years as of too long a Duration for the Sins of this short Life? Nay, will not that of an *hundred* Years, or *fifty*; or indeed any *given Space* of Time, that is *considerable*, be liable to the same Objection? There is no End of yielding, and one Concession does but pave the Way to another. When once they have given up the Eternity of Punishments, when once they have deserted that Post which was strictly tenable; they may be driven backwards by those, who will dispute every Inch of Ground with them; till at last they have not sufficient Ground left to stand upon.

And let them seriously reflect, what they are doing. Whether at a Time, when the Torrent of Wickedness rises high, and makes every thinking Man besides themselves afraid; whether at such a Juncture it be proper to break down, or lower those Fences and Mounds, which keep out the Overflowings of Ungodliness? Our Desire and Love, and Hope, says a great Writer are not so apt to be wrought upon by the Promises of Rewards and Happiness; as

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our Fear is from the Apprehension of the divine Displeasure. For, as he observes, though we have lost in a great Measure the Gust and Relish of true Happiness; yet we still retain a quick Sense of Pain and Misery.

Celsus, though a professed Enemy to Christianity, yet commends the Christians for maintaining that *the Good should be happy hereafter; but the Unrighteous doomed to Punishments strictly eternal: From which Opinion*, says he, *neither let them, nor any other Mortal depart* *. But I proceed,

II^{dly}, To consider the Nature of future Punishments.

Some there are, who will not allow, that *God* immediately and *directly*, by a *positive Act*, confers any Rewards upon Virtue, or inflicts any Punishment upon Vice, here or hereafter. All the Penalties and Rewards they admit of are such, as naturally flow from our Actions. Thus they make Hell to be nothing but a Remorse of Conscience, an inseparable Attendant, as they think, on Wickedness. This

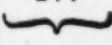
* *Celsus apud Originem; Pag. 409. Editio Cantab.*

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IV.

is, in Effect, to dethrone God as a Legislator, to weaken the Interests of Virtue, and to make dangerous Concessions in Favour of Vice. For, if this Scheme were true; then the *greatest Sinners* would have the *least Punishment*, perhaps *none* at all: For the *greatest Sinners* are hardened, *past* all *Remorse*, all *Feeling*, but that of *Pain*. Those, on the other Hand, that have made the *least Advances* in Vice, would bear the *greatest Punishment*, as they would feel the *most Remorse*. Whereas God most *abhors*, and consequently will *most severely punish*, those, who are so far from having any *Compunctions* of Conscience, that they *delight in Wickedness*.

We have standing Proofs of the Deluge to this Day. The *Exuviae* of Sea Creatures, the numerous Beds of Shell-Fish, and other Spoils of the Ocean deposited on the highest Hills, found not only in Islands, but in Continents, where the Sea could never come, but by a Miracle, are so many incontestable Demonstrations and *authentic Monuments* of the *Deluge*; as *that* is an *authentic Monument* of God's *Justice* and *Vengeance*; and that He, who cut off all the old World except eight Persons, for
 3 their

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their Sins, is not a Being quite so easy in SERMON
IV. Respect of Vice, as we may fondly imagine. 

In short, the whole Universe witnesseth, that a Deluge of Waters once overspread the Universe. And if even in *this* World, which is designed for a State of *Trial* and *Probation*, and not for an exact distributive *Justice*, proportioned to Men's several Merits and Demerits, God could involve all Mankind, except some few, in one promiscuous Ruin; what Punishments may await the Impenitent, when the last decisive *Day* of *Justice* and *Judgment* cometh? May not those Senses, which God has created to be so many *Inlets* of *Pleasure*, become so many *Avenues* of *Pain* and *Anguish*?

I know some have denied a local Hell, But it is very clear from Scripture. *Depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity, into the Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels,* i. e. Depart from the Place, where I am; into that, where the Devil and his Angels are. And again, the Devils besought our Saviour, that *he would not command them to go out into the Deep*; or, as it is in the Original, into the Abyss. It appears then, that the Bad go from this World, where I 3 there

there is only a *Mixture* of Evils, into a Scene of mere Misery, Horror, and Torment. If God, who *delights* to communicate *Happiness* to as many Beings as the Universe can conveniently hold, has, in Pursuance of this Scheme, filled every beautiful and agreeable Province in it with Creatures susceptible of *Felicity* in the Pursuit of Virtue and Perfection; the necessary Consequence is, that those Creatures, who have *disqualified* themselves for *Happiness*, must be condemned to *dismal* and *uncomfortable* Mansions; from which, probably, after the last Adjustment of Things, there will be no Outlet, nor Possibility of making an Inroad upon the Rest of the Creation. There will be a Congruity between the Nature of the Place, and that of the Inhabitants, which will settle them there, and every one, like *Judas*, must go to his own Place. It is idle to dispute, whether the Fire denounced against the unrelenting be metaphorical or real. Suppose it a Metaphor; yet those Metaphors, which represent Things of another World, do not generally exceed the Originals, or the Realities of the Things designed to be shadowed out by them.

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The Ingredients of future Punishment<sup>SERMON
IV.</sup> are partly positive, and partly the natural Consequences of bad Actions, viz. Appetites ever craving and clamorous, but ever unsatisfied; *Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul that doth Evil*: An eternal Banishment from the blessed Presence of God, and the Society of Angels, and *just Men made perfect*; and a Confinement to the Company of malicious Spirits, an everlasting Torment to themselves, and ever tormenting all about them.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Our Saviour cried out, when he felt only a *momentary* and *partial* Eclipse of the Light of the divine Countenance. But when a deep and genuine Despair saddens the Scene all around, without the least Beam of Light from any Point of Heaven; then—I was going to describe the Misery. But if Words can paint this Night-Piece of Horror, the Copy must be drawn by those, whose Unhappiness it will be to be too well acquainted with the Original. Here *the Body pressed down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle the Mind, that mused upon many Things*: But when the Soul shall be clothed with refined Matter, which

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will not encumber her in her Operations; her whole Duration will be one continued Stretch of Thought, without any Pause or Intermiſſion. And what a Miſery muſt it be to be thinking ſtill; and yet to have little or nothing to think on, but endless Miſery? To be at once deprived of all ſenſual Delights, and cut off from the Enjoyment of rational and ſubſtantial Blifs, is a Miſery that we cannot now conceive, and—may we never feel!

That this may never be our Portion, let us, *Idly*, Attend to ſuch practical Inferences, as ariſe from what I have before laid down.

1^{ſt}, Beware of evil Habits. It is impoſſible to overcome entirely our *firſt* Nature; and it is next to impoſſible to overcome long ſtanding *Habits*, which are our *ſecond* Nature. To deſtroy the Power of Vice is like laying *the Ax to the Root of the Tree*: And it is not *one Stroke*, however vigorous, or *one Endeavour*, which will bring the Tree down, and *root it up*; though it may contribute towards it: No, there muſt be *ſeveral repeated Strokes*, and a continued *Perſeverance*, to gain the *deciſive*

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cisive Victory over it, and to finish it's Ru-^{SERMON}
in, however deeply rooted. When Sin has ^{IV.}

had for a long Time the Dominion over us, our Resolutions of Amendment will be, according to the beautiful Thought of St. *Austin*, like the Endeavours of those, who are trying to wake out of a deep Sleep, into which they sink back again, overcome by the dead Weight, which hangs upon them. Take Care then of your Actions: Every evil Action is a Step towards an evil Habit; and every evil Habit is a Step towards that bottomless Gulph, from which there is no Return. For when once ill Habits are rivetted in the Soul, you are miserable for ever, by a *Necessity of Nature*; you have made yourself an Object incapable of Mercy, and indisposed to receive the Communications of the divine Favour. Let it be acknowledged that a sincere and thorough Repentance, implying an *entire Change* of the *Heart*, can never be too late; but let it be likewise granted, that a late Repentance is very seldom in this Sense sincere. If the Man were reinstated in his former Health, *Ease* possibly might recant the Vows, that were made in Pain, as null and void.

2dly,

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2dly, As you are to avoid evil Habits, be sure betimes to acquire good Habits, as the necessary Qualifications for Heaven. Some seem to think, that Religion consists in some *broken disjointed Acts* of Piety: But let them not deceive themselves: True Religion consists in the *inward Frame* of the Mind, in the standing Bent of the Inclinations, in *settled Habits* of Piety constantly residing in the Breast, and, as often as there is Opportunity, breaking forth into outward Acts. Thus a Man shall think himself devout, if he now and then *occasionally* says his Prayers, and frequents the public Worship; though he often absents himself upon *every slight* Occasion, upon *no* Occasion at all. But let him not deceive himself: If he were really devout, he would have a Relish for Acts of Piety; his Heart would *cleave stedfastly unto God*, and then he would not neglect private or public Prayers upon frivolous Pretences. Thus again a Man shall think himself charitable, because he now and then performs *occasional transient* Acts of Charity: But he alone is a charitable Man, who *loves Mercy and Charity*, and *showeth* that he loves them, by the main *Tenor and Current* of

of future Punishments considered. 123

of his Actions; who, with a strong Bene-^{SERMON}
volence of Soul, is glad to relieve proper ^{IV.} }
Objects of Charity when he can; and sin-

cerely sorry when he cannot. And yet the very Sorrows of the Charitable give more substantial Satisfaction than the Joys of the Selfish. For Compassion for the Distrest (a Sorrow of which the Charitable are most susceptible) gives them to understand, that the habitual Disposition of their Mind is right; And he, who does not feel that lovely Disposition within, must want a Pleasure, the Absence of which no other Pleasure can counterbalance. He is a thoroughly good Man who has often *tried* and *found* his Virtue *genuine*, and *clear* of all *Ostentation*; who, instead of *boasting* or *complaining*, loves to *conceal* the Good he does, and the *Ills* he suffers; who thinks that Happiness scarce any at all, which is *solitary* and *uncommunicated*; as Paradise was no Paradise to *Adam*, till he had a *Partner* of it. Till we have acquired an habitually-good Bent of Temper, we have not acquired those Qualifications, which are the main Ground-work and Foundation of our future Happiness: We are not *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* There-

Therefore, 3dly, Let us all consider, that our *future* Misery or Happiness depends upon our *present Behaviour*. Our Happiness in *Manhood* depends upon those early Accomplishments, which we have acquired in our *younger Years*. If that proper Seed-Time of Life be neglected, we must expect no Harvest in the Autumn of it. Just so our Felicity in *another Life* must be owing to the Preparations we make for it *here*. And what we *must be to all Eternity*, will be the Consequence of what *we have been in this World*.

There is a certain *Fool-hardiness* prevailing too much among us in Relation to a *future State*. Men *live* as carelessly or profligately, as if they *never* were to *depart* this Life; and then *depart* this Life with as much Stupidity and Hardness of Heart, as if they *never* were to *live again*. They rush unprepared into the Presence of the *just*, the *holy* Legislator of the whole World, as inconsiderately and audaciously, *as the Horse rushes to the Battle*, a Creature not capable of being frightened with Consequences, because incapable of reflecting upon them. God, say they, is *all Goodness*; and therefore they dare to be what he must necessa-

of future Punishments considered. 125

necessarily hate, the very *Reverse* of Him—SERMON
IV.
all Wickedness : Not considering, that *the*

Goodness of God should lead them to *Repentance*. For God cannot love a Nature directly and habitually contrary to his ; and cannot *but* love what is in some Degree conformable to his Holiness and Purity. Now what he loves must be for ever happy ; and what he hates for ever miserable. Let Men think or say what they will to the contrary ; it is *Goodness* which ought to make every immoral Agent *afraid*, a determined, *impartial, universal* Goodness in a Being, who, *because* he is *infinitely good*, will inflict every *deserved Evil*, which is productive of a *prepollent Good* ; and will inflict *none*, *but* what is productive of such ; who will consult the universal Interest, and not that of a *few incurable Members* of the whole stupendous *Body* of the Universe.

Such Men would do well to reflect, that Men even here in the natural Course of Things bring upon themselves such ill Habits of Body, and Miseries of all Kinds, that they can never extricate themselves from, as long as they live. The Course of Nature is so established, that Death alone sometimes puts a Period to those Ills, which
they

126 *The Nature and Duration, &c.*

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IV.

they have plunged themselves into by their Follies and Vices : If they were to live for ever, they would be probably miserable for ever, by the ill Consequences of their Sins, which take Place in a *natural* Way. Now whatever comes to pass by the *settled Course* of *Nature*, is as much done by *him*, who *appointed* the Course of Things, and fore-saw every Consequence that would arise from every Manner of Acting ; as if he had *immediately inflicted* the *Punishment* himself. And as the same God, who appointed the Nature of Things here, is the God of the other World as well as this ; may not something like this come to pass in that other State ? May not the Impenitent be for ever lamenting those Ills, which no Prudence can redress, no Patience make supportable, and no Time put a Period to ?

I cannot conclude this Head, without wishing, that *all* of us may *believe* the Doctrine which I have here inculcated, to be true ; and that this Belief, with the Concurrence of other Motives, may have that Effect, that *none* of us may *feel* it to be so.

SERMON

SERMON V.

The Nature, Possibility and Truth,
of a particular Providence set forth.



PSALM CXIII. 5.

*Who is like unto the Lord our God, who
hath his Dwelling so high; and yet hum-
bleth himself to behold the Things that
are in Heaven and Earth?*

IT is one great Recommendation of the SERMON
V.
Sacred Writings, that they have ex-
pressed themselves with more Justness
of Thought concerning the Nature of God,
than any other Compositions whatever.
What the Vanity of Science falsely so called
has ascribed to *Nature*, or to *second* Causes
exclusively of the first, is by them resolved
into the *immediate* Will and *Providence* of
God. This is the truest Philosophy, as
well as the best Divinity. For what is
Nature? is it an *understanding* Being? or
is it *not*? If it be *not*, how can an unde-
signing

128 *The Nature, Possibility and Truth,*

SERMON V. *signing* Being produce plain Notices of *Con-*
trivance and *Design*? If it be an *Under-*
standing Being, who acts throughout the
 Universe; then it is that great Being, whom
 we call God. And here I would observe,
 that no Words are more *undetermined* in
 their Signification, than those, which pass
 current in *common* Conversation. We ne-
 ver question, but that we clearly *understand*
 what is daily in our Mouths, and therefore
familiar to us: Whereas those Words are
 often mere *Sounds*, without *Sense*, or any
settled Signification. Thus few seem to
 know (though it is the only clear and de-
 terminate Meaning of it) that Nature in
 this Case means nothing, but the *constant*
 and *stated* Operation of God upon Matter.

We have no less Reason to *beg* our daily
Bread of Almighty God, than the *Israelites*
 had to pray for their Sustenance, when
 they were fed with *Manna* from Heaven.
 For that a Handful of Corn should multiply
 to a prodigious Degree, and that the Fields
 should *stand so thick with Corn*, that they
 should *laugh and sing*, must be ascribed to
 God, as well as that the *Food of Angels*
 was given from above to the *Israelites*:
 And there is no Reason why we own the
 one

of a particular Providence set forth. 129

one to be the Gift of God, and not the other ; but this, which is indeed *no* Reason at all ; that what God does *once*, we acknowledge to be his Doing ; but what he does *always*, we therefore deny he does at all. His constant Works are become familiar to us, and consequently make no Impression upon us.

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The *Generation* of a human Body in the *ordinary* Way is no more to be accounted for by the Laws of Mechanism, than the *Raising* of a dead Body from the *Grave* : And the only assignable Motive, why we attribute the latter to the immediate Agency of God, and not the former ; is that the latter is an *unusual* Operation of the Deity. If we saw Bodies *commonly* rise from the Grave, as we do Corn from Seed sown in the Earth ; we should endeavour to explain this Effect, just as we do the other, from Philosophical Causes exclusive of the First.

No Beings, but what have *Life* and *Sense*, can, in Propriety of Speech, be termed Causes : All other things being *dead* and *inactive* are only like Tools in the Hand of a Workman : And whatever we ascribe to *Matter* a *passive* Being, must be resolv-

130 *The Nature, Possibility and Truth,*

SERMON V. ed into *his* Will, who useth *Matter* as an
Instrument.

But I need not insist upon this Point any longer. For to deny a Providence in general, is, in Effect, to deny a God. If there be a God *invested* with the *Attributes* of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness; Providence is nothing but the *Exercise* of those Attributes, *viz.* his Wisdom, Power and Goodness on the Creation in general. It cannot be supposed, that he will let those Attributes lie dormant in Him in a State of Inaction, without exerting them at all.

A *general* Providence then must be granted: But a *particular* Providence is clogged with some Difficulties. I shall therefore, to remove them,

Ist, State the Doctrine of a particular Providence.

IIdly, Shew the Possibility of it.

IIIIdly, I shall prove the Certainty and Truth of it.

IVthly, Subjoin and conclude with some practical Reflections.

Ist, Then, I am to state the Doctrine of a particular Providence.

I.

Ist, We

of a particular Providence set forth. 131

1st, We must not expect, that God's particular *Providence* would interpose, where our *own Endeavours* are sufficient. For that would be to encourage Sloth and Idleness, instead of countenancing and supporting Virtue. Nor ought we to expect to be relieved from Difficulties and Distresses, into which our own Mismanagement and criminal Conduct has plunged us. But when without any Fault of ours our Affairs are so perplexed and intangled, that human Assistance will be of no Avail; then we must have Recourse to God, that he would give us *Wisdom* to conduct us through all the Labyrinths and Intricacies of Life, *Resolution* to grapple with Difficulties, and *Strength* to overcome them. In this Light the Prayer, which *Josephus* puts into the Mouth of *Moses* just before his Passage through the Red Sea, is very just and beautiful. Unpassable Rocks barred his Escape one Way, the numerous Host of the *Egyptians* blocked up all others: Before him stood the Red Sea. In this Situation *Moses* just upon the Brink of Ruin applies himself thus to God: " Lord, thou knowest that
" no Strength, Wisdom or Contrivance of
" *ours* can here be of any Significancy. It

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“ is in *thy Power alone* to find out a Way
 “ for the Deliverance of this People, who
 “ by thy Command and under thy Con-
 “ duct have left *Egypt*. Despairing of all
 “ other Ways, we flee to *thee* alone for
 “ Succour : Lord, let it come speedily ;
 “ give us a full Proof of thy Almighty
 “ Power and Veracity. We are in great
 “ Straits, great and unsurmountable by *us* ;
 “ but to *Thee* slight and inconsiderable.
 “ The Sea is thine and it obstructs our
 “ Progress : The Mountains that shut us
 “ up, are thine too. Thou canst divide
 “ this Sea, or turn it's Waves into firm
 “ Land, or make us find a safe Passage
 “ through the devouring Deep.”

Here was a *Knot* too hard for any but
 the *Deity* to untie : and therefore the Deity
 descended upon the Scene to unravel the
 perplexing Difficulty. But in common
 Cases the best Way is to rely upon Provi-
 dence, as if all human Endeavours and Re-
 sources were useless, as indeed they are,
 without it ; and yet to exert our Endeavours
 as vigorously, as if Providence would
 not interpose at all. For God will not pro-
 situte his Power to supersede our Endeavours

of a particular Providence set forth. 133

vours as to what we *can* do ; He will only supply, what we *cannot* do.

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2dly, We must not expect that Providence would so far consult our *private* Interest, as to counterwork that of the *whole*. Those general Laws, which are calculated for the *Good* of the *Whole*, may in *some* Cases be *detrimental* to some *few Persons* ; but in the *Main* are *beneficial* even to *them*. For if God should upon no extraordinary Emergency for no prepollent Good deviate from his Laws ; the utmost *Reach* and *Compass* of Thought would avail *no more*, than *Childhood* and *Ignorance* : All human *Industry* and *Forefight* would be at a *Stand*, which *depend* on Things going generally on in a *stated Track*. For there could be no Room for *Counsel*, Deliberation and *Forecast*, where there was no *orderly Constitution*, no *settled Course* of Nature. It would not signify to till the Ground, that we might reap the Fruits in due Season : There would be no Dependance upon the Ebbing and Flowing of the Waters at set Times, and so in a thousand other Cases : It is for the Interest even of *that* Man, who is uneasy because the Settlement of Nature is not changed in Compliance with his Wishes ;

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that God has given Things a Law, which shall not be broken upon every frivolous Occasion. For if the Deity should depart from his uniform Manner of Acting upon his Application in any *material* Point; why should he not do so to gratify the Importunity of *other* Persons? The Consequence of which would be, we should live in an irregular disjointed World, where there would be no Harmony, no Order, no Law; but all would be Confusion and Anarchy. God can and does govern the *rational* World, without subverting and unhinging the Frame of the *natural*.

3dly, We are not to expect that Providence upon our repeated Requests would grant what we *imagine* a Blessing; there being several Things which we think to be Blessings, that are not so upon the *Whole*, or not so to *us*. And Providence is not like an indulgent Parent, who destroys the *future Happiness* of his Children, by complying with their importunate Petitions, and removing their *present Uneasiness*.

We must distinguish likewise between *natural* and *fantastic* Wants. Providence has generally made ample Provision for the *former*, but not for the *latter*. Besides those

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those Desires, which are *inborn*, there are several which are *inbred* in us by early Custom and by a Neglect of Reason: Such are those of high and sumptuous Food, of Honours and all the *Pride of Life*. Now every regular Inclination, *every Plant, which our heavenly Father hath planted*, he will take Care in Concurrence with our own Endeavours to feed and nourish. But we ourselves, if we will not part with them, must *maintain* those *spurious* and *illegitimate* Desires, which we have *begot* in ourselves. There would be as *exact* an *Adjustment* of the *Means of Subsistence* to the respective Wants of the *rational* Creation, as there is to those of the *animal* World; if Men unsatisfied with Necessaries and Conveniencies had not *made* Life miserable by *acquired* Uneasinesses and Cravings. In short, we are got into a *World*, in some Measure, as it were of our *own Modelling*, instead of having it, as it came *originally* from *God*: We have introduced much Misery and Disorder by Luxury, Pride, Ambition, and by unnatural Desires.

Nor must we, *4thly*, hope, that Providence will prevent every Calamity, that may befall good Men. All, that the Af-

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sertors of a particular Providence contend for, is that, if he does not think fit to prevent it, he will either support them under it, or rescue them from it; or make all Things, at the last Winding up of the Drama, work together for Good to them, who love him. To annex worldly Happiness *constantly* and *universally* to Virtue, and worldly Misery to Vice, would lay too great a Bias and Restraint upon our Inclinations; it would over-rule the Will, and necessitate it to be virtuous. This Life would be no State of Probation and Trial: There would be no Temptation to *Vice*, when all the Advantages lay on the Side of Virtue.

II^{dly}, Having stated the Doctrine of a particular Providence, I proceed to prove the Possibility of it.

We must distinguish between the *grand* and *fundamental* Laws of Nature; and those of an *inferior* and *subordinate* Nature. The Oeconomy of Nature may be in a great Measure *unalterable*, as to the grand and *fundamental* Laws, by which the Universe is steered: Such are those respecting the *Revolution* of the *heavenly* Bodies, the
Succession

of a particular Providence set forth. 137

Succeſſion of *Day* and *Night*, and the SERMON
V.
Round of the *Seasons*. But there are other
ſubordinate and *inferior* Laws, which God
may alter without any *ſeeming* or *viſible*
Alteration. And to recede from them un-
der proper *Limitations*, *occasionally* at the
Inſtance of *particular Perſons*, may be *no*
Detriment to the *Univerſe*, and yet of great
Importance to *them*. Such are the Laws
relating to the Courſe of *infectious* and peſ-
tilential Vapours, the State of the *Atmo-*
sphere, &c. Nay, with whatever deci-
ſive Airs Men may talk of God's Govern-
ment by general Laws; yet, as to *ſome* of
theſe Points, ſeveral Matters of Fact are
not to be accounted for upon that Scheme.
Thus for Inſtance, according to *general*
Laws, the greater Quantity of Rain *has*
fallen, the greater Quantity ſhould *ſtill con-*
tinue to fall: becauſe the more Water reſt-
ed upon the Ground, and ſwelled the Ri-
vers; the greater Quantity of Vapours muſt
be attracted by the Sun, and deſcend again
in Showers. And yet this is contrary to
Experience. On the contrary, the longer
any Drought has continued; the longer,
without the Interpoſition of Providence, it
ſhould ſtill continue; Becauſe the Ground
being

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being parched, and the Rivers either dried up or much sunk; the Number of Vapours, which are exhaled from thence, must be very inconsiderable. All pretended Solutions of this Appearance do but *shift off the Difficulty one Remove*, without fully obviating it; except we call in the divine Providence, *which giveth the former and the latter Rain*, to our Aid.

God undoubtedly can abate or quicken the Force of Winds, Storms and Lightning; can retard and weaken, or increase and accelerate their Influence, without reversing the settled Course of Nature in a Manner perceptible to us; so as to bring about what he sees fit, and prevents what he does not think so. We ourselves very often, within the limited Sphere of our Activity, stop or hasten the Motion of Bodies, or change their Direction. And shall we deny the Exertion of that Power to the *great Creator*, which the *meanest of his Creatures* is invested with? May He not clog or quicken the Wheels, and direct the Springs of natural Causes, so that *Wind and Storm* may fulfil his Word?

The Deity must *proportion* his Care to the *intrinsic Worth* of the *Object*. Now *one Being*, who is ennobled with the distinguishing

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distinguishing Perfections of *Reason and Liberty*, is of more Value, than the whole *Mafs of Matter*, how vast soever in Extent. He will therefore have a greater Regard for rational Beings in Proportion to the superior Excellency of their Nature. God made the material World intirely for the *spiritual*; and consequently will govern it with Regard to the latter: The material World being but the *meer Shell*, which was formed and beautified for the Sake of it's *Inhabitants*. This would incline one to think, that God is not so tied up to general Laws, as to have *no Reserve of Power* left to himself, to provide for particular Exigencies.

But supposing he seldom or never swerves from his stated Method of Acting; yet the particular Occurrences of each Man's Life may be directed by a Power delegated to *Angels*, and that too, consistently with the established Course of Nature. This Supposition is confirmed by several Texts of Scripture. Thus we read in the second Book of *Chronicles* xvi. 9. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to shew himself* (it should be rendered *themselves*) *strong in the Behalf of them, whose*
Heart

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Heart is perfect towards him. That by the *Eyes of the Lord* is here meant the *Angels of God*, is plain from St. *John*, who mentions *Revel. v. 6. the seven Eyes which are the seven Spirits or Angels of God sent forth into all the Earth.* The Psalmist expressly says, *The Angel of the Lord encampeth about them, for fear of him, and delivereth them.*

We see, that as the Scale of Beings descends *downwards* from Man to Brutes, from Brutes to Insects, from Insects to Plants; the *higher* Beings in each Link of the Chain have some Kind of Dominion and visible Authority over their immediate *Inferiours*: Man for Instance over Animals, and Animals over Plants. And, from that Harmony which runs through all God's Works, we may conclude that as the Scale ascends *upwards* from Man to Angels; *they* too have some Power and Influence over *us*; as we have over Brutes, and Brutes over those of a lower Species.

If it be asked, why in punishing the Wicked, in curbing and over-ruling their Actions, so that they shall not be able to go beyond the Will of God *to do less or more*; and in protecting, chastising or trying

of a particular Providence set forth. 141

ing the Good, God does not always act SERMON
V. immediately ; it may be sufficient to answer, that as God does not exert a *supernatural* Power, where an *human* was sufficient ; so he may never put forth his *Omnipotence*, where an *Angelical* Power was equal to the Effect to be produced ; or in other Words, he may never use *more* Power or *greater* Means, than it was *requisite*. *The Angels of God are ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation.*

Let us suppose that a Person, whom God designs to be the Instrument of promoting the Happiness of the World before he dies, has an Intention to go some Way, where Assassins lay in wait for him, or to pass by a Building which is ruinous and ready to fall. It is not necessary, that God should absolutely destroy the Liberty of free Agents, or suspend the Force of Gravitation : He may, by the Ministry of Angels, lay several Impediments in his Way, give him a different Turn of Thinking, suggest several Reasons, why it may be proper to defer his intended Journey, or put him upon taking a different Road, or over-rule his Intentions. A thousand Impressions

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pressions may be made upon him, in this or any other Case, when imminent Danger threatens him, to alter his Purpose. However *fixed* and *determined* some may suppose the *Laws*, by which the *material* World is governed, to be; the *Mind* of Man at least is *changeable* and *capable* of *new* Determinations: and God, in whose *Hand* the *HEART* of Man is, *as the Rivers of Waters*; and *who turneth it, whithersoever he listeth*, may change it by secret Influences, and by making Things appear in another Light, than they did. Or he may render the *Hand* of the *Russian* *unperforming* by striking a *Terror* into his *Heart*, at the *Instant*, that he meditates the Blow. Or there may be several Ways above our Understanding, by which God may suit his Providence to *private* Cases, where the Course of Things goes on in a regular Channel without overflowing.

This is certain, that though several Things may *seem accidental* to us, who are ignorant of their true Causes; yet *nothing* is *accidental* to the *Deity*, to whose View every Cause, how minute soever, that lies hid in the Depths of Futurity, is unlocked and exposed. And, what we *miscal Chance*,

Fate

of a particular Providence set forth. 143

Fate or *Fortune* in our Language here be- SERMON
low ; They, who speak another Language V.
above more agreeable to the Truth and Reason of Things ; call the wise *Dispensations* of an *all-directing Providence*. *Fortune* and *Chance* are but Words to signify our Ignorance : The *Scripture* teacheth us a more *just Manner* of expressing ourselves, as for Instance ; *The Lot is cast into the Lap ; but the whole Disposing thereof is of the Lord*. What thus appears a *Casualty* to us, is here referred to the *Disposal* of the supreme *Dispenser of Good and Evil*. And again, when the eleven Apostles were to chuse another into the Room of *Judas* by *Lot*, they ascribe the *Direction of the Affair* to God's unerring *Providence*, though it was managed by *Casting of Lots* : *Thou, Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew, whether of these two thou hast chosen*. Whatever is seemingly effected by the Ministry of second Causes, God so lays, directs and conducts the Train of Events, as to serve his own beneficial Purposes. The *Scripture* very fully and expressly asserts a particular Providence : *God holdeth our Soul in Life : He is a very present Help in Trouble : The very Hairs of our Head are*
all

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all numbered : Not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without the Deity : Nothing being so small and inconsiderable, as to escape his infinite Knowledge ; Nothing so great or unweildy, as to encumber his Almighty Power.

Still this Objection may be advanced : We may suppose two Men equally Good, equally the Care of Providence, begging at the same time, the one for an Eastern Wind ; the other for a Western, as most commodious for his Voyage. How can God's Providence gratify Both, when their Requests are contrary ? To which I answer, that, though God cannot gratify Both, by granting their particular Requests, which interfere, because he cannot do what implies a Contradiction ; yet he may consult the *Interest and Advantage of Both* : He may be equally gracious in what he *withholds from* the one, as in what he *vouchsafeth to* the other. He may make an Incident, however contrary to his Wishes, turn out upon the Whole to his Benefit, by an unexpected Train of Occurrences, by secret and unsuspected Methods. In the Case of *two contrary and clashing Petitions* God will do what is for the Good

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of a particular Providence set forth. 145

of the *Whole* ; but so, as that the *particu-*^{SERMON}
lar Good of each Individual, who prays ^{V.}
affectionately, means well and acts up to
that Meaning, shall coincide with the ge-
neral Plan. Nay if the stormy Wind,
which he deprecates, should arise and sink
him in the Deep ; yet it may bring him
to a far more valuable Haven, *the Haven*
where he would be, the Land of everlast-
ing Rest.

But can God, you will say, behold the
Things that are in Heaven and in Earth,
and with one comprehensive View com-
mand the whole Compass of the Universe ?
Yes. *He that made the Eye shall be not*
see ; and He, that made the Ear, shall be
not hear ? Or he that teacheth Man Know-
ledge, shall be not know ? Consider that *He*
invested you with the *Faculty of Knowing*
and Thinking : And can you stupidly ima-
gine, that what you know and think *by*
and *from him*, can escape *his* Thoughts and
Knowledge ? Look upon that glorious Lu-
minary the Sun : It's Light flies swift as
Thought from one Part of the Universe to
the other ; it penetrates into every Corner,
and *nothing is hid from the Heat thereof*.
And can you think, that the *Knowledge of*

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the *Deity* does not extend much farther and penetrate deeper, than the *Light* of that Body, which is the Work of his Hands? It is as certain that God seeth us and all our Actions, as that he giveth us the Power of seeing. Fain would we imagine him *far from us*, fain would we substitute in his Room a blind *unthinking Deputy* called Nature in an Universe, where we discern every where plain Traces of Wisdom, Thought and Contrivance; and therefore there must be every where present a Being of Thought, infinite Wisdom and Contrivance. The Jews, as we learn from *Maimonides*, waved their Sacrifice upwards and downwards, North and South, East and Westward, to intimate that the Being, to whom they consecrated their Sacrifice, was every where, a Being whom no Place could *confine*, and none *exclude*.

Let us then leave it to him, who alone is equal to the mighty Province, to adjust in such a Manner the various *interfering* Interests of Mankind in *general*, and to consult the *private* Cases of each *Individual*; that every Man, who makes it his Business to recommend himself to God, may find his Happiness over-balance his Misery.

But

of a particular Providence set forth. 147

But this brings me to my III^d Head, SERMON
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viz. to prove the Truth and Certainty of
a particular Providence.

1st, That the Deity should not grant every particular good Man, what is really for *his Good* upon the *Whole*, and no ways inconsistent with that of the *Public*; must either argue, that He is *unwilling*, or that he is *unable* to grant it. Infinite *Goodness* cannot but be *willing* to communicate *Happiness* to every Individual, who is not wanting to himself; and infinite *Power* cannot but be *able* to bring about, whatever his Goodness wills.

Let us suppose a Man combating with some *uncommon* Distress, to which his *Strength* is greatly *unequal*; let us suppose, that this Man, who has *regarded* God during the main Tenour of his Life according to the *best* of his Abilities, now *implores him* with all the *Energy* of Devotion, as his *last*, his *only Refuge*. Can we imagine, that *the Father of Comforts* and *the God of Mercy* will stand *looking* upon his Trouble; without either vouchsafing to him any *outward* Assistance, which *he* can easily do in an unperceived Manner to whom *all Nature* is *subservient*; or communicating to him

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any *inward* Consolation, though he knows each Avenue to the Soul? He may not think fit intirely to *remove* his Misfortune, but he will either *lessen* or *abate* it, so that he shall not *be tempted above what he is able*; or he will adjust his Succour to his Exigency.

2dly, God will *respect* and treat every Man agreeably to *what he is*; and therefore there can be no *irrespective* Course of Things. Matter and Motion are very *undistinguishing*: they make no Difference between him that *serveth* God, and Him, that *serveth* him not: But God doth: For no good Man, I believe, ever prayed constantly and affectionately to his Maker, without having an *Experience*, that God has answered his Prayers at some *nice* and *critical* Conjunction. If all Things happen according to the Laws of Mechanism, by a *fixed* Chain of natural Causes, without any Act of a *respective* Providence, without any Superintendency and *Direction* of Events; then we live, to all Appearance, in a *fatherless* World, liable to a thousand Dangers, Casualties and Distresses, which no Foresight can prevent, no Skill elude, no Power fence off. It is an Impeachment
of

of a particular Providence set forth. 149

of God's Goodness to suppose, that as soon SERMON
V. as he has made any Man, he dismisses him immediately out of his Hands and abandons him, without a Design to answer his Prayers, or take any farther Notice of Him in his Passage through this World, or to accommodate the Dispensations of Providence to his Wants and Deportment.

3dly, Instinct is a Proof, that Providence extends itself to every *particular Brute*; Instinct being the immediate Energy of the Deity acting upon each of the Brute Creation. For it operates, as soon as Animals are *born*: As soon as they make their Entrance upon this new Scene the World, they do *not* act as mere *Strangers*: They seem to be *acquainted* with the Food that is beneficial to them, and to shun what is dangerous. A defenceless Brood, when Danger threatens, takes Shelter under the Wings of their Parent; while another Brood, though hatched under the same Fowl, runs to the Water, regardless of the affectionate Cries and tender Yearnings of their *Foster-Mother*, which would call them away from an Element, which it thinks destructive to them. Now, what we call Instinct, cannot be the Result of *mere Matter and Motion*:

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tion: For undirected Matter and Motion cannot shun Danger, and pursue what is advantageous. It cannot be the Effect of Reason in the Creatures themselves. For Reason is an Acquisition, and Men ripen into rational Beings by a progressive Opening and Unfolding of the Mind. Reason is an improveable Faculty, in it's Nonage for several Years; and our Souls, as well as Bodies, come naked into the World and unfurnished. Instinct must be then, as I said before, the divine Energy acting immediately upon the Animal Creation: It must be his Power, who giveth Fodder to the Cattle, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him.

Besides, every Species of Brutes observes a peculiar Track; They go on in a Line without deviating from it; Instinct does that by one unvarying Method, which Reason does by several; They observe the same Plan in the Structure of their Nests, even those, which had never seen one before: Whereas if they had Reason, they would vary as much in their Schemes, as we do; they would project new Plans and improve old ones. And whereas rational Creatures can correct the Reports of the Senses,

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Senses, and over-rule their Solicitations; SERMON
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Brutes are intirely governed by natural Im-
pulses, and by the Prompting of the sensi-
tive Appetites.

Now if Providence condescends to re-
gard every *Individual* in the *Brute* Creation
so far, as to act constantly in it and upon it;
shall he not *much more* extend his Care to
every *particular* Person in the *rational*
World, and adapt his Dispensations to the Ne-
cessities of each single Person in it? Consider
the *Fowls of the Air*; for they sow not nei-
ther do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet
your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not
much better than They? He, whose over-
flowing Bounty has supplied the Birds of
the Air and the Beasts of the Field with
whatever is suitable to *their* Natures, will
provide for Mankind in a Way suited to
the Condition of the *rational* Nature. He
openeth his Hand and filleth all things liv-
ing with *Plenteousness*: And shall he not
answer the various Occasions and Circum-
stances of Man, the Master-piece of the
visible Creation?

4^{thly}, Those who admit a *general* Pro-
vidence, but deny a *particular* one, seem
to forget that *Generals* are nothing but a

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Collection of Particulars; they are nothing but the *Sum total* of Individuals. And consequently as *Generals include Particulars*; a *general Providence* must *imply* a *particular* one. If the *Whole* of worldly Affairs and Concerns be the *universal Chain* of Providence; then each Man's *private* Concerns are *one Link* of that Chain which is affixed to the Throne and directed by the unerring Hand of God. All the Arguments, which prove that God governs the World in *general* in a Manner which suits best with *Reason*, prove likewise that he takes Care of *particular* Cases in the *same* Manner. For God can no more act *contrary* to *Reason* in any *particular* Case, than he can in *general* do so.

The *Time*, the *Manner* and *Condition* of each Man's Existence must be determined by Him, upon whom each Man's *Existence* depends; which cannot be done without *descending* to *Particular*. 5thly, The surprizing Discoveries of Murder, the Fall of the Wicked into the Pit, which they made for others; the strange and judicial *Infatuation* of Men *wise* at all other Times, when some great Event was to be brought about, which can only be

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be resolved into his Power, who maketh SERMON
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the Knowledge of the Wise foolish, and
turneth their Counsels backwards; the In-
discretion of others succeeding, when well
concerted Plots have failed; the Dispro-
portion of the visible Means to the Effect;
these are so many Arguments to prove a
particular Providence at the Helm, to whom
the minutest Occurrences are more discern-
able, than the most gross palpable and sub-
stantial Causes are to us.

There is great Reason to think, that
God often breaks the fine spun Threads of
human Policy, and brings the most unpro-
mising Projects to bear. Were the Soul
divested of the Body, she might find her-
self as much mistaken about several Turns
of Affairs; as the Trojan Hero was, who
was enraged at the Grecians, whom he
thought the sole Authors of his Country's
Ruin: But when the Mist was removed
which dimmed his mortal Sight, he saw
the Destruction of the City, in which he
thought human Agents were only concern-
ed, was caused by Beings of a much su-
perior Nature.

We have a pregnant Instance in Scrip-
ture, that God vouchsafed to sit at the
Helm

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Helm of the Jewish State. For when all the Jews three times a Year were obliged to go to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and consequently left the Frontiers of their Country unguarded; what could hinder their Enemies, (and no Nation had more Enemies,) who used to *defy the Armies of the living God*, from making a Descent upon a *naked and defenceless Country*? What, but He who in the Language of Scripture *boweth the Hearts of a whole Nation, as the Heart of one Man*? When God has some great Design in View, he giveth one *universal Bent* of Inclination to a whole People with the same Ease, with which a *Gust of Wind inclines all the Tops of Corn in a waving Field the same Way*.

This, you will say, is only a Proof of a national Providence; it facilitates, however, our Belief of a Providence extending to each Individual. What follows, directly proves it, as to the *better Part* of us, our *Souls*. God is every where present; and to suppose that an infinitely good Being can be invisibly present to the Soul, without awakening in it pure and virtuous Notices, and exciting it to the Pursuit of Piety, not indeed by irresistible Force, but by

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by rational Motives, would be to entertain SERMON
a worse Notion of an *all-gracious God*, than V.
we do of a *pious Man*. For any good Man,
who is continually present with us, will be
suggesting advantageous Rules for the Con-
duct of Life, if he hath our eternal Inte-
rest at Heart. The Philosophy now in
vogue allows, that God continually acts
upon Matter; and that whatever Motion
there is in the great Bodies of the Universe,
is owing to his immediate Operation. But
if God acts continually and immediately
upon *Matter*; it will be hard to assign any
sufficient Reason, why he should not act
upon, what is much *nobler* than Matter,
the *spiritual World*.

There are very few, who have not,
some time or other, just as they were upon
the *Point* of perpetrating a *bad Action*, felt
a *sudden Check* or *Restraint* upon them,
which has rendered their Design abortive.
Something, they knew not what, at that
very *Crisis*, when, if they had gone a *Step*
farther, it had been *too late* to retreat, hath
withheld them from *sinning*. A chill Fear-
fulness and Trembling hath come upon
them, that were Strangers to Fear; and
an unusual Damp hath overcast the Soul,
which

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V.

which had been inured to hardy Attempts. When any good Suggestion without any antecedent Train of Ideas ariseth in our Minds, we know not how or from what Quarter, we ought to look upon it as a Beam of Light darting in upon our Minds from the great Father of Lights; and let us improve, cultivate and ripen it, till it breaks forth into correspondent Actions.

IVthly, I shall make two or three Reflections, and so conclude.

1st, Let us learn from hence to form the most august Ideas of the *divine Nature*, of which *ours* is capable.

Look how wide and spacious this *Earth* is, on which we live: Yet this *Earth* is as it were but one petty *Province* of God's *universal Empire*, one little *Wheel* of the vast *Machine*, the whole *World*. How astonishingly great then is that Being who sets each *Wheel* in Motion, and regulates the whole *Circumference* of the *Creation*; where there are *Diversities of Administrations*, but the same God, which worketh All in All? It is his *Power*, which wields so many massy *Bodies*, and bids the *Planets* go their everlasting *Round*; it is his *Wisdom*, which

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which adjusts *such Variety* of Movements SERMON
without the least *Confusion*; it is his Good-
ness, which has *enriched* the Universe with
such a *Profusion* of Good, *beautified* it with
such *Order and Harmony*, and *ennobled* it
with such *Magnificence* and *Grandeur*. V.

Yet this Earth, all these Worlds, which
move above us, far more, than the naked
Eye, than Glasses, than the *Imagination*
can reach, are but before him (in the Lan-
guage of the Prophet *Isaiab*) as a *Drop of*
a Bucket, and are counted as the *small Dust*
of the Balance: behold he taketh up the
Isles, as a *very little Thing*: That is, the
Isles and indeed the whole Universe are in
his Hands, what a *light insignificant Weight*
is in *ours*, which we *take up* and manage
at our Ease, without being in the least en-
cumbered by it. What is your Spirit a-
midst such a Multitude of Spirits, as pro-
bably inhabit these Worlds? No more,
than a Drop amidst the vast Collection and
Assemblage of Waters.—Yet you are as
much the Care of the great Author of all
these Worlds, and Father of all these Spirits,
as if there were no Creature for him to pro-
tect and love but you. No Person how-
soever little or insignificant, who regards
him,

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V.
him, can be *unregarded* by Him, who, with one *Glance of Thought* can know every Thing, without Study and painful Researches; and with one *Motion of his Will* can do every Thing, without Toil or laborious Efforts. He hath *preserved* your *Going out*, and your *Coming in*, comforting you in Troubles, directing you in Difficulties, saving you from several Dangers, which you know nothing of, and conducting you through this Maze of Life.

2dly, Instead of scaring yourself with melancholy Views, and letting your *Heart* fail you for *Fear*, and for looking after those Things, that are to come upon the *Earth*, when Wickedness and Irreligion prevails; let it be a Matter of Joy and Comfort to you, that amidst all the Confusion and Madness of the World, Men cannot faster *perplex* and *entangle* Things, than God can *unravel* them; or *embroil* the World, than he can bring *Order* out of Confusion; that the Wicked are under the secret Controul of his Providence; that *the Lord is King*, be the People never so impatient; be *sitteth between the Cherubims*, be the *Earth* never so *unquiet*; that he can make the *Machinations* of wicked Men

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Men an *accidental* Occasion of Good, and ^{SERMON}
serve *his* gracious Designs, in opposition to ^{V.}
their *own*.

Lastly, let us never do any Thing to throw ourselves out of his Protection. Let us consider how *vain* all *Schemes* for *Happiness* are, out of which *He*, the *Fountain Head* of Happiness, is left, who can dash the Joys of Prosperity with such unpalatable Ingredients, as render them no Joys at all; and qualify the Bitterness of Poverty with such Infusions of Joy and Gladness, as shall make it easy and tolerable. And perhaps *He*, who *made* the Soul, can *alone* make it *thoroughly happy* or *miserable*: *He* can *pierce* it *through and through* with *Sorrow* and *Pain*, and make it, when *incorrigibly bad*, *irretrievably wretched*; or he can pervade it and *fill* the *whole Capacity* of it with *unconceivable Bliss*. Then, and not till then, we are intirely undone, when God has *cast out our Soul*, cast it from his Presence, from the Comforts of his Presence. For his Presence is every where: But it is to the Good and the Wicked; just what it was to the *Israelites* and *Egyptians* before the Red Sea: To the former a *Pillar of Light* to brighten up every thing around them;

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V. to the latter a *Cloud* and *Darkness* to trouble and disquiet them. While we enjoy the Light of the divine Countenance, we need not be dejected at the Frowns of the whole World. For if God be FOR us, it will in a short Time signify little or nothing, who was against us: But if He be against us, what will it signify, who was for us? Our Communication and Intercourse with our nearest and dearest Relations may be intercepted by our Misfortunes: But our Intercourse with the nearest Object of all, even Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being, cannot be intercepted but by our Vices. He who never faileth them that seek him, will never forsake us, till we forsake Him and Virtue. He is, according to the expressive Description of St. John, *Light and Love*, pure unclouded Light, without any Mixture of Darkness and Ignorance; and pure unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Malice and Hatred: He knows whatever is really Good for us; and will do whatever in his unerring Judgment is most effectually conducive to our Good, making every disastrous Incident finally terminate in our Benefit.

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SERMON VI.

The intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their divine Inspiration.

In Two SERMONS.

I PETER III. 15.

Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope, that is in you.

IT is surprizing to observe, what a close SERMON VI. Connexion and mutual Dependance one material Truth has upon another. Thus, for Instance, that there is a God, those manifest Traces of infinite Wisdom, which appear through the whole Oeconomy of Nature, sufficiently make out. The whole World is in this Respect as it were one great Temple, where, as in the Jewish, the Shechinah or divine Presence shines

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confest

confest in a visible Glory. The same Arguments, that prove our own Existence, demonstrate God's. How do we prove there is a vital Principle within any Person? Why, because he moves, he thinks and acts: And can we from these Operations conclude there subsists within us a Principle, which actuates and informs the Body: And shall we not from the stupendous Operations of the Universe conclude, there is a Being that actuates and invigorates all Nature *?

And if there be a God, there must be some Religion; or, in other Words, some Homage must be due from an indigent and dependent Creature, to his great Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. And if some

* Est, est profecto illa Vis; neque in his Corporibus, atque in hac imbecillitate inest quiddam, quod vigeat ac sentiat: & non inest in hoc tanto Naturæ tam præclaro motu; nisi forte idcirco esse non putant, quia non apparet, nec cernitur: proinde quasi nostram ipsam mentem, qua sapimus, quâ providemus, quâ hæc ipsa agimus ac dicimus, videre, aut plane qualis, aut ubi sit, sentire possumus. *Cicero pro Milone.* Unde scis tibi inesse vitale Principium? Respondebis, quia loquor, quia ambulo, quia operor. Stulte, ex operibus corporis agnoscis viventem; ex operibus Creationis non agnoscis Creatorem? *S. Augustinus.*

Religion

Religion be necessary, it must be one that ^{SERMON VI.} is sufficient, or is sufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind. Now, that natural Religion, or that Religion, which the Light of Nature dictates, is not sufficiently calculated for the Generality of Mankind, is evident from hence; that to trace a considerable Number of Doctrines up to the Fountain-Head from which they flow, by the Strength of unassisted Reason, and to pursue them to their remotest Consequences, is a Task at least extremely *difficult* to Men of *Letters*, but I may venture to say *impracticable* to the *Ignorant*. Besides, pure natural Religion is a meer *Utopian* Scheme, which may perhaps have existed in the Minds of some few recluse contemplative Men, but was never in Fact established in any one Nation from the Foundation of the World to the present Times. As certain as it is, that there is a God; so certainly must he will the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion: the Belief of *some* Religion, and a Practice conformable to that Belief, being *necessary* to the Good of Mankind. And as certainly as he wills the Belief and Practice of *some* Religion; he must will the Belief and Prac-

— { tice of the *best* Religion: And *what* Religion is there, that *equals* or *rivals* the *Christian* Revelation?

Such Reflections, as these, enable us, in some Measure, to act in Conformity to the Apostle's Advice; they make us *ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope*, or, as the Word here signifies, of the Faith, *that is in us*.

I should enter into too spacious a Field, if I attempted to do Justice to all the Proofs of Revelation: It shall therefore be my Business at present to dwell upon that Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion.

In the Prosecution of which Design,

Ist, I shall consider the intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion, as to the Manifestations of the divine Nature.

IIdly, As to the beautiful Plan of Morality which is laid down in Scripture, together with the Motives and Encouragements, by which it has supported and enforced that Plan.

IIIIdly, I shall consider the Force of the Argument which may be drawn from these Particulars.

Ist, I

If, I shall consider the intrinsic Excel-^{SERMON}
lency of revealed Religion, as to the Mani-^{VI.}
festations of the divine Nature.

That God is *Love*, or an inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness ; that *of Him* as the great Creator, *through Him* as the great Preserver, and *to Him* as the End and Center, *all things are* ; that he only said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*, that whatever he commands, is finished by his commanding it ; are some of the noblest Ideas that we can conceive of the noblest Being that is. In these Expressions there is that *natural* and *unlaboured* ; yet *great* and *noble Simplicity*, which surpasseth the *Refinements* of Stile and *ambitious Ornaments* of profane Writers : Just as there is a *native Beauty* in the Lily, which *our heavenly Father has clothed* ; that exceeded the *artificial Pride* of Dress, in which *Solomon* appeared, *when arrayed in all his Glory*. Such Thoughts are ennobled by themselves, and dignified by their own inward Merit, without any need of external Pomp to embellish them. At other Times the sacred Writers deliver themselves with all the Heightnings of Oratory, as particularly *Job*, when he is describing the

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infinite Power of God, and St. Paul, when he is setting forth the Love of the Deity manifested in the Redemption of Man: Not that they affected Eloquence; but when the Spirit of God came upon them, and impregnated their Minds with great Ideas; they naturally broke out into such lofty and corresponding Expressions, as might be a proper Clothing for their Thoughts: As when our Saviour was transfigured, and his Face shone as the Sun; his Raiment too became as white as Snow.

That *the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work, &c.*—That *He that made the Eye, shall he not see? He that planted the Ear, shall he not hear? &c.*—That *the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain God*; much less the Temple built by Solomon.—That the Deity weilds and governs the whole Expanse of the material Creation as *a very little Thing, as the Drop of a Bucket or the Dust of the Balance*; and that he can turn *the Hearts of the whole intellectual World, as the Heart of one Man*.—These, with several others, are Passages which would be highly admired in a *Classic Writer*; but, *unhappily for them*, they

they are read with Coldness and Indifference; because they are in a *Book*, which it is too *fashionable to depreciate*. For though Men pretend to think for themselves; yet not one in a thousand does so; no not even in judging of Books: They are governed by no fixed Standard in the Judgments which they form; but applaud or condemn according to the prevailing Mode and Fashion of the Age, in which they live. Otherwise, *Moses, Job, David, Isaiah*, and *St. Paul* would have had as many Admirers as Readers; Authors, who seem to have imitated none before them; and whom none after them have been able to imitate, or reach their sublime Strains of Eloquence.

Those Authors in dead Languages, who are looked upon as the most *finished Models* of good Writing, would suffer so much by a *literal Version*, that we should not have the Patience to peruse them with Attention; yet the Scriptures have been rendered Word for Word with the most scrupulous Exactness: And if, notwithstanding this, they deservedly claim our highest Admiration; it is a Proof, that they have in them that *Energy of Beauty*, which *no Dress*, howsoever disadvantageous, can intirely conceal

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or disfigure. They must have that *solid Sense and Substance*, which, like *true Gold*, can never be *lost* or evaporate, however *melted down* and *dissolved*; but still *retains* it's *former Weight*. Some Writers may have painted Things more *finely* and *delicately* than they have done: But none have imaged them so *strongly* and *nervously*.

Observe, what a wide Difference there is between two Passages in the Psalms, and in *Plato* on the same Subject. That, which is in *Plato*, is as follows. " Though you
" could sink into the deepest Caverns of
" the Earth, though you had Wings and
" could fly up to the Heights of Heaven;
" whether you continue in this World, or
" remove to Hell, or to some Place more
" terrible; the Divine Providence would
" seize you every where." * Thus the great *Plato*, who confessedly wrote with the noblest Elevation of Thought on divine Subjects: But how infinitely short doth this fall of that Passage in the Psalms which he seems to have had in View? *Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit; or whither shall I go then from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there; if I*

* *Plato de Legibus. Lib. II.*

go down to Hell, thou art there also: If I ^{SERMON VI.} take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there also thy Hand shall lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say, peradventure the Darknes shall cover me; then shall my Night be turned to Day: Yea, the Darknes is no Darknes with thee; but the Night is as clear as the Day: The Darknes and Light to thee are both alike.

If Plato imitated the Psalmist, his Copy is unequal to the Original: It is like a secondary Rainbow, the faint Reflexion of the first; where, though the Colours be agreeable, yet they are not so lively, glowing and distinct, as they are at first Hand in that, which compasseth the Heaven with a glorious Circle, and which the Hands of the Most High have bended.

Pretenders to a fine Taste may extol that Passage in *Virgil*, where he says, * *Night involved in it's Shade Heaven and Earth and the Frauds of the Grecians*; who are not affected by a much nobler Beauty, though of the same Kind, in the Psalmist,

* — Involvens umbrâ terramque, polumque,
Myrmidonumque dolos. —

Virgilii Æneidos Lib. II.

viz.

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viz. *God stilleth the Raging of the Sea, and the Noise of his Waves, and the Madness of the People.* In both Places, there is an unforced and unaffected, yet a striking and surprizing Assemblage of Ideas. In the former, Heaven, Earth and the Frauds of the *Grecians*; in the latter, the Raging of the Sea and the Madness of the People, are naturally, yet unexpectedly put together. But the latter Passage, besides this Beauty, is recommended by the noble Sentiment, which it conveys. The wisest Statesmen, when the Populace is in a Ferment; just as the ablest Pilots, when the Sea rageth, are at a Loss what to do; *they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken Man, and are at their Wit's End*: And he alone, who can say to the tempestuous Deep, *here shall thy proud Waves be stayed*, can alone still the Madness of an incensed People, and say, *Hitherto shall you come, and no further.*

Something should be added concerning that *affectionate Manner*, in which these Truths are conveyed. When the *Heart* does not dictate to the *Head*; whatever is said generally evaporates in empty *Speculation*; the Notions only hover in the Brain,

Brain, without influencing the Will. But SERMON VI.

when an Author writes from the Heart, the Reader catches the Flame from the Writer, and feels his Breast glow with the same generous Ardor. Take one Instance of this, out of many, from *Isaiah*: *Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.* It is thus, that God signifies his tender Love in the most endearing and expressive Terms, which Language can furnish. Observe how the Psalmist describes God, as that sovereign Good, on whom we ought to center our Affections, and repose our Confidence: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee: My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion for ever:* Words forcible enough, one would almost think, to invigorate the Soul under all the Decays of the Body, and to suspend the Pains of the Dying. The Scriptures, unlike some Books which are written upon the Being of God in a cold
unaffected

unaffected Manner, at the same Time that they convey Light to the Understanding, powerfully inflame the Will and touch the inmost Springs of the Soul.

Few or none have ever wrote worthily of that great Being, *who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast*; but those, who have derived their Notions from the Fund of the Scriptures, and borrowed that *Fire from Heaven*, which animated their Writings: Which Consideration would incline one to think, that he who is the *Subject* of these elevated Thoughts in the sacred Pages, is the *Author* of them too.

As to the Glories of God and of another World, I may venture to say, that the *utmost Stretch* of human Thought could never reach *so far*; and the *utmost Force* of Expression cannot reach *farther* than the inspired Writers have done. And could one Book be produced before the Date of Christianity, where every Perfection of the *Deity* is displayed in such a *nervous Energy* of Thought; and every Branch of *Morality* is set forth in such a *plain Familiarity* of Style; where the Terms of our Salvation are so punctually ascertained

ascertained as they are in the Scripture: SERMON VI.

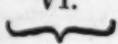
Then some Persons would have some Colour of Reason to disparage Revelation. But the Enemies of Christianity know this to be impossible: They know it contains *stronger* Motives to true Holiness, than *any other* Religion before *had*; and *as strong as any other can have*: They know, that secure in its own genuine Charms, it fears no *Rival to eclipse*, and needs no *Foil to set off* it's superior Beauties.

The *Power, Wisdom and Goodness* of our Creator may be demonstrated by numerous and incontestable arguments from the *Creation*. But one may look long enough into the *Creation*, and consider it throughout, before one can deduce one argument from thence to prove, what Mankind most wants to have proved, his *Mercy to repenting Criminals*. What signifieth it to prove God's *Goodness* to the *World in general*, without proving, that he will be good to *us Men*, to (what we all are) *miserable Sinners*? Arguments of God's *clear and unmixed Mercy* to penitent Offenders, there can be none from Matter of *Fact*, if we set the Scriptures aside; Arguments from *Metaphysics* are very inconclusive;

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conclusive; but if they were not so, they are too abstracted to make any strong and durable Impression upon such Beings as we are: *One* express and *authentick Declaration* from God himself would be of more Weight, than a *thousand fine spun Conjectures* without it. Accordingly the God of the Christians is not *merely* our *Creator* and *Preserver*, a Being of inexhaustible Power and unfathomable Wisdom; he is a God of *Mercy* and *Comfort*, *who is not willing that any should perish*, *who pitieth us, as a Father pitieth his own Children*, *who healeth the broken hearted*, *who rescueth us from the Bondage of Corruption* by his *Grace*, and *redeemeth us from the Punishment* of it by his *Merits*. Such a God we sinful Creatures wanted; and such a God the Scriptures, which are exactly adapted to our Necessities, have represented him to us.

No Religion whatever hath given us a clearer Insight into both the Dignity and Meanness of our Nature. The same sacred Writings, which inform us, that we were made in the Image of our Creator, and that we shall be hereafter *Heirs* with him, with several other Considerations
very

very proper to beget in us an *Ambition* of SERMON VI.
 acting up to the *Dignity* of our Nature, 
 and to *spirit up* the most *low* and groveling
Minds; the same sacred Writings teach
 us that we can do nothing of ourselves
 without the Grace of God co-operating
 with us, that nothing but the Merits of
 our Saviour can entitle us to any Rewards,
 with several other Reflections proper to
 preserve in our Minds a Sense of our De-
 pendance, and to *humble* the most *haughty*
 and *insolent*. Thus the Christian Religion,
 which giveth us the most amiable as well
 as august and awful Ideas of our Creator,
 displays at once the bright and dark Side
 of human Nature, the one to *animate* the
Endeavours of the *Good*, and the other
 to *damp* the *Presumptions* of the *Vain*.
 But this brings me,

II^{dly}, To consider the intrinsick Ex-
 cellency of the Scripture as to the Plan of
 Morality, which is laid down there, toge-
 ther with the Motives and Encouragements
 by which it has supported and enforced
 that Plan.

The Scriptures have taken Care to lay
 down such pregnant Truths, as are big with

several others, and fruitful in their Consequences. Of this Nature is the Precept about *loving God with all our Strength*: Of this Nature likewise is that about *loving our Neighbours as ourselves*; or what is much the same, that we should do to others, what we should judge reasonable others should do to us, if we were in their Case. This last Precept is sufficient to determine all Cases of social Morality; it being the Foundation of Honesty, Equity, Mercy, and Charity. It is a Duty incumbent upon us to store our Understanding with such *leading Truths*; because such *great Truths* come as it were *in State* to the Understanding, waited upon by a numerous *Retinue* of inferior dependent Truths: Like the Sun attended upon by a large Train of Planets, which are subordinate to him, and receive their Light from him.

If Men would argue from such general Precepts, as are delivered in Scripture, to their own particular Case in each Occurrence of Life, without consulting their Passions; they would not want a determinate Rule of Duty, nor be at a Loss how to act even in the most complicated Cases.

of the Scriptures, a Proof, &c. 177

The Scriptures have been very full in ^{SERMON VI.} pointing out *every Duty* in general : Because corrupt human Nature is very *backward* in tracing out and discovering Duties. But they have not pointed out each *Limitation* of our Duty : Because corrupt Nature is very *ingenious*, and *not* at all *reluctant* to do that Office. It is rather apt to *make Limitations* where there are *none*, than *not* to *find* them where they really are. It was not so much the Design of Revelation punctually and exactly to fix the *Theory* of Morality, as to engage our Hearts to the *Practice* of it by the most powerful and affecting Considerations. And that may be one Reason, why it often rests in *Generals*, without descending to *minute Particularities*. For if our *Hearts* be *not engaged* in Favour of *Virtue*, it will be of no *Avail* to have each minute *Particularity* of Duty *adjusted* : We shall break through it, however minutely and particularly it is laid before us. A *general* Knowledge of his Duty is *sufficient* to him, whose Heart is *right* ; and all the *particular Unfoldings* of it will be of *little Significancy* to him, whose Heart is *not* so.

God, who knew what was in Man, and has suited his Revelation to our Exigencies; has taken most Care to supply us with that, which was most wanted. And therefore the Scriptures are most full, explicit, and particular, as to those Branches of Morality, to which our Nature was most averse. And though some complain that the Bible is not clear and determinate enough as to certain Points; yet, if I mistake not, the main Quarrel against it is that it is too clear and determinate in enjoining certain Duties, and forbidding certain Vices; as to which they could have wished to have been left more at large. It cramps their Freedom of Action, and will not give certain importunate Passions their full Scope. It is there that the main Stress is laid upon those Virtues, in which the Heathen World were mostly or entirely defective, such as the Love of God with all our Heart, universal Benevolence, the Forgiveness of our Enemies, Meekness, Long-suffering, the strictest Purity and Chastity. There was no such Thing in the Pagan World, as a rational and determinate Scheme of worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth; and no such Duty en-

joined,

joined, as Humility in it's full Latitude. SERMON
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No such Precept occurs in Heathen Writers, as that we should give *Alms in secret*; that our *Father which seeth in secret*, may reward us openly. And yet this is the most substantial Test of genuine Virtue. For we ought to be jealous of those shining Qualities, which draw upon us the Admiration of the World, such as Generosity, Valour, &c. because we are often actuated to the Performance of them by a Principle of Vain-glory: But the Performance of good Actions in private, when the Stream of our Goodness runs under Ground, stands clear of all sinister Views, and can only be resolved into a Principle of pleasing our Maker.

Before the Appearance of Christianity, the World had narrowed their Notions of Love, and confined it to the Pale of their Friends, Relations, and Country. A moral Writer of the most extensive Views, that ever Paganism boasted, even *Socrates* himself expresseth himself thus: "When the *Grecians* and *Barbarians* fight one against the other, this is properly called Fighting: For they are Enemies by Nature. But if *Grecians*, that are Friends

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“by Nature, quarrel with one another, this is an unnatural Distemper *.” Thus *Socrates* recommended an Attachment to his own Country, exclusively of the rest of Mankind, against whom he makes a State of Enmity to be lawful. But Christianity has enlarged the Sphere of our Affections, as well as opened a wider Field of Truth for the Understanding; and enjoined a Love, as extensive as the Light of the Sun, and as active as it's Heat. Then our Affections are prejudicial, when like the Sun-Beams, collected in a burning Glais, they centre in one Point; when they are widely *diffused*, they chear and refresh all Nature. Christianity has taught us to love every one, but to dread no Man whatever: At the same Time, that it cherisheth every manly, noble, and exalted Principle, of which human Nature is capable; it shuts out every little, servile, and illiberal Passion. A Love so extensive was fit to be enjoined by that Being, who is Love itself, and has in him the Fulness of every amiable Perfection.

Whereas other Writers took Things in too high a Key, and were proud to soar

* *Plato de Repub. Lib. V.*

above the Level of common Apprehensions; the inspired Writers stoop to the lowest Capacities at the same Time that they enlighten the highest. Of which the Parables of the *uncompassionate* Servant, of the *Samaritan*, of the *prodigal* Son, of the poor Man's *Ewe Lamb*, of the Vineyard in *Isaiab*, of the barren Tree *which cumbered the Ground*; are so many beautiful Instances. We view moral Truths through the Veil of Allegories and Parables; like so many Pictures through a transparent Glass, which covers, but does not hide them. Thus does *Truth*, like the great *Author* of it, stand confest in a visible Shape, receive, as it were, a *Body*, and become, if I may use the Expression, *incarnate*.

From these few Strictures on the Plan of Morality contained in the Scripture, I proceed to what was the principal Intention of the sacred Writers, the Enforcement of Morality by proper Sanctions and Encouragements.

The inspired Penmen have placed Virtue on it's *true Foundation*, not upon any *present Complacency*, not upon any *low temporal Motives of Conveniency*; but upon

The intrinsic Excellency

heavenly Views, upon the Will of God as
our Judge and Rewarder. To follow Vir-
tue disinterestedly, without any Regard to
our Happiness here or hereafter, is to pur-
sue it as an empty Idea, and not as a sub-
stantial Good. To love it for the Sake of
present Pleasure and Happiness, will never
induce an effectual Obligation; because
Virtue and Pleasure do not always coincide;
because that reflex Act of the Mind, by
which it applauds itself, when it has en-
tertained a generous Sentiment, or done a
noble Action, is easily over-ruled and dis-
abled by the urgent Solicitation of any
boisterous and craving Passion, and by any
uncommon Distress and Anguish. Fine
uninteresting Ideas of Virtue, even in a
Soil susceptible of them, which some Soils
are not, flourish as a Flower of the Field:
Which, however delicate and beautiful
the Leaves may be, as soon as the Wind
(any strong tempestuous Wind) passeth over
it, is gone, and the Place thereof, for a
Season, knoweth it no more. Besides, whe-
ther of the two acts upon nobler Principles,
the Man, who cultivates Virtue for the
reflex Approbation of his own Mind, or
he, who practiseth it for the unerring Ap-
 probation

probation of *his Maker*? The Man, who ^{SERMON VI.} loves Goodness for a much lower, because *present*, Consideration, viz. the Pleasure immediately consequent to a good Action; or he, who commands a more spacious Prospect, has more open and extended Views; and looks beyond this transient Scene of Things, to that *Fulness of Joy*, which is at God's right Hand for evermore?

Be that as it will, an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory will turn the Scales, and preponderate in all Cases in Favour of Morality: But weigh a cold unaffecting Thought about abstract Fittnesses, and the Loveliness of Order, against the strong Pressure of incumbent Misery; and it will be found wanting, lighter than Vanity, and nothing in Comparison. God designed the World in general should be governed by Morality, and not only a few notional Men, fond of Refinements, who may be so enamoured of Virtue, as to think it needs no Reward, but itself; nor Vice any Punishment, but it's own natural ill Consequences. And what God designed for the Gross of the Species, that he has enforced by such substantial Rewards and

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Punishments, as may interest all the Powers of a Soul deeply immersed in Matter, and not by such airy visionary Notions, nor seem to be calculated for quite another Order of Beings. And this is one great Proof of the Excellency of Christianity, that it can appeal to the common Sense of Mankind: "Handle me and see," the refined "Schemes, which are set up in Opposition to me, have not that Substance and Solidity, which ye see me have." Those fine spun Notions may afford Entertainment to speculative Men in their Closets; but the Christian Doctrine of a future State, is the only one that can be of any Use in common Life, conveying to us the strongest Ideas of that Misery, to which the Bad will be consigned; and of that Happiness, to which the Good will be admitted.

Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things that God hath prepared for them, that love him. In which Words there is, as a great Writer * observeth, a very beautiful Gradation of Thought. Great, splendid, and numerous are the Objects, which the Eye hath seen; Yet

* See Dr. Clarke's posthumous Sermons, Vol. II. the

the ~~Ear~~ may hear far more, than one Man's ^{STAMPON} Eye hath seen, by an enlarged Conversa- ^{VI.} tion with those who have read and travelled. But though a greater Variety of Objects may gain Admittance to the Mind through *this* Entrance, than through that of the Eye; yet still it enters into the Heart of Man to conceive or imagine far more glorious Things, than even the Ear has heard. A sprightly, adventurous, and inventive Imagination paints Objects larger than the Original, and forms what visionary Scenes it pleases within. But still those Things, which God has prepared for them that love him, as much exceed the Heightnings of a pregnant Fancy, and the romantick Prospects of Bliss, which it can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive; as the Conceptions of the Heart, and the Powers of a luxuriant Imagination surpass the seeing of the Eye, and the hearing of the Ear.

Again St. *John* tells us, *we shall be like God: For we shall see him, as he is.* That is, the seeing of God as he is in his own Nature, the direct Knowledge of the Sovereign Good, and the Emanations of Happiness from him immediately, (for to see
God

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God as he is, does not signify merely to contemplate his Nature) will so entirely fill the Compass of the Soul, and engross all her Powers, that having no Room to entertain ignobler Objects, which might tempt her to Vice, she must become, in some Degree, unalterably like her Creator in Goodness by a moral Necessity. Pleasure and Virtue, which here often ~~draw~~ *different* Ways, will hereafter unite their Forces, and act in friendly Concert. This Thought is the Thought of an unlettered Writer; yet it is a Thought so rational, as well as elevated; that it would be a vain Attempt to strive to equal it from Writers before him of the most distinguished Abilities and closest Application.

Let us scan over the brightest Authors of Antiquity, let us point out the Master-Strokes of those Authors when they are inculcating Benevolence: Yet where can we find so bright a Description of Benevolence or Charity, as there is in St. Paul's xiiiith Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*; or so noble an Incitement to it, as there is in these Words, *Charity never faileth?* i. e. The same Principle of universal Love to Mankind, which repeated

Acts

Acts of Goodness beget in us here, will SERMON VI.
beautify, enlarge, and ennoble the Soul
to all Eternity.

Not all the Writings of Philosophers
can give a dying Man, just upon the
Threshold of another World, half that
well-grounded Comfort and rational Assu-
rance of being happy, as may be derived
from four or five Lines of St. John, viz.
*That he saw in Heaven a great Multitude,
not to be numbered, of all Nations, Tribes,
and People, and Tongues, standing before
the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in
white Robes, with Palms (the Ensigns of
Victory) in their Hands, and the Praises
of God and the Lamb in their Mouths.*
For from hence we may learn, what Rea-
son could never prove, that not only the
superior Few, Men of the most advanced
Virtue, Saints and Apostles; but an innu-
merable Multitude, the *undistinguished
Many*, undistinguished by any extraordi-
nary Degree of Holiness, shall be Par-
takers of those pure and unmixed Joys,
which are suitable to glorified Souls acting
in glorified Bodies, which will enlarge our
Faculties, satisfy our Desires, and transcend
our Expectations.

The intrinsic Excellency

And indeed we may observe, that, whenever the Scriptures *draw back the Veil*, and display to our View any thing concerning another World; they do not do it to *swell* and puff up the Soul with *lifeless Speculations*, with unconcerning, though ingenious and curious Notions; but to *fill* the Mind with true *substantial* Knowledge, that may make us *wise unto Salvation*: Which makes them, though not the most *fine-spun*, yet the most useful, and consequently the best Scheme of *Metaphysics* that ever was advanced.

Thus when the sacred Writings describe the *thousands, thousands that stand before God, and the ten thousand Times ten thousand that minister unto him*; could a Man of the largest Compass of Thought have found a nobler Employment for these Beings, as well as more instructive to us, than to represent them as taking a generous and disinterested Complacency in the Redemption and Happiness of their Fellow-Creatures; *praising God, and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men*: And in another Place, not like us, valuing themselves, and despising others; not dazzled with

with the Lustre of their own Excellencies, but ascribing all Glory, and Honour, and Power, to him alone who is the Source of whatever is lovely, great, and glorious? *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints!* They shew us, that to Creatures, admitted to a constant and immediate Attendance on God, every Thing must appear little, but God himself; that the Lustre of the greatest created Being must vanish and be lost in the Presence of him, from whom it borrows it's Lustre.

Contemplative Persons may value some Branches of Knowledge, just as several Men do some Kinds of Food, merely because they are rare and uncommon, not because they are substantial, nourishing, and wholesom. Their Difficulty and Obscurity, not their Serviceableness to the World, stamps a Value upon them. And their Heads may resemble those Cabinets, which are stored with *useless Rarities*, and *curious Trifles*, fit for *Shew and Ostentation*, but not for any *valuable Purposes* of Life. But the Scriptures, though they open and enlarge the Mind, and give it the most
compre-

comprehensive Views; yet seldom say any Thing to inform the Head, which has not Tendency to awaken and penetrate the Heart: They seldom gratify our mere Curiosity, or make us wiser and more knowing, but in order to make us *better*, which is indeed the only *true* Wisdom. No well-meaning Person even in low Life ever applied himself to the reading of the Scriptures with the same Diligence, Care, and Attention, which he bestowed upon Things of less Consequence; but he gathered from thence as much salutary and *practical* Knowledge, as would conduct him safely in the Way to everlasting Life. Though the *studious* and *thoughtful* may by an unwearied Application discover several *speculative* Truths, which are *not* there; yet those Truths are only like those *Stars*, which are discovered by the help of *Telescopes*. They have no more *useful* Light to guide their *Feet*, and direct their Steps in their Journey through this World, than those, who have made no such Discoveries. There is no one material Defect in a State of *Nature*, when Men had only the Light of unassisted Reason; but what is supplied

supplied to a Title by a State of Grace, by the Christian Dispensation. Were Men, for Instance, at a Loss to ascertain from unenlightened Reason the Acceptableness of their Repentance, and a Fulness of Pardon thereupon? Christianity has fully set before us the Terms of our Salvation: We have there a Mediator, who hath born our Sins, the properest Person to adjust the Difference between the jarring Claims of Justice and Goodness. Did we want a distinct Account of Rewards and Punishments, of their Degree and Duration? It gives us awakening Notices of another World, and whatever was proper to instruct our Reason, as well as to engage our Hopes and alarm our Fears. Did we want some fixed and determinate Rule of Worship to prevent the endless Sallies of human Fancy? There we are taught each Particular of a manly and rational Worship; we are invited by the Promises of divine Assistance, and emboldened by the Intercession of a divine Mediator to have Access to the Throne of Grace.

It is well worth our while, as it will give us the greater Value for Christianity, to observe, that in these, as well as other Instances,

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Instances, wherever the Light of *Reason*, as having no sure *Principles* to carry it farther, was forced to leave a *Blank*, the Light of the *Gospel* has been very exact in filling up the void Space. Where human Sagacity might indeed begin to build, but was not able to finish after the utmost Expence of Thought, there Revelation has supplied it with Materials to complete the Structure. Thus do our Wants in a State of Nature, and our Supplies in a State of Revelation, exactly tally and correspond. And from hence we may infer, that, whoever is a sincere natural Religionist, cannot be far from the Kingdom of Heaven, is almost a Christian already; and will be soon, if he continues unprejudiced, altogether so. For he, who is sincerely desirous to know and do the Will of God, must heartily wish he had better Helps, than natural Religion affords, to compass this End. He must think, that God's infinite Goodness would, at some peculiar Crisis of Time, when he saw the Advantages arising from it would overbalance the Inconveniencies, grant Mankind by a Notification of his Will some full and express Assurances of what belongs to their Peace, of Things of

infinite

infinite Concernment. And when he ^{SERMON VI.} examines all the different Pretensions to Revelation, he will find none, that can come into *Competition* with the *Christian*; which alone contains *whatever* is *excellent* in *natural* Religion, and has besides *grafted* upon it several rich and salutary Fruits of it's *own Growth*, which Reason must ever thankfully adopt. For natural Religion neither proves the Sincerity or unalloyed Nature of Happiness hereafter, nor the Degree nor the Duration of it.

So far was Christianity from narrowing our Views, that it alone has *raised* them, as *high*—as *Heaven*; and extended them as *far*—as *Eternity*. A Man may look into his Bible, and see plainly there what will become of him, when the present Scene is shifted, as to his *most important*, I had almost said, his only Concern, a future State; who, if he were left to himself, the more he considered the Point on every Side, the more he would find himself bewildered in Doubts, without coming to any Determination.

Happy are we, if we know our Happiness, who have a Revelation, like it's great Author, *full of Grace and Truth*.

SERMON VII.

The intrinsic Excellency of the
Scriptures, a Proof of their In-
spiration.



PETER III.

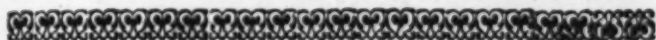
Be ready always to give an account of the
Man, that useth you in hope of the
Life, that is in you.

TO affirm, as some have done, that
unenlightened Reason is absolute-
ly sufficient, and that a Revela-
tion was needless, is not a better nor
worse; than to say, that Men either are,
or may be, so wise of themselves, that it
is not in the Power of God himself to
make them wiser; that their natural Abi-
lities are so very considerable, as to super-
cede the Use of any supernatural Notices,
even from the Father of Lights: A Po-
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The intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures, a Proof of their Inspiration.



I PETER III. 15.

Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh you a Reason of the Hope, that is in you.

TO affirm, as some have done, that SERMON VII. unenlightened Reason is absolutely sufficient, and that a Revelation was needless, is neither better nor worse; than to say, that Men either are, or may be, *so wise of themselves*, that it is not in the Power of God himself to make them *wiser*; that their *natural* Abilities are so very considerable, as to supersede the Use of any *supernatural* Notices, even from the *Father of Lights*: A Position

sition so shocking, that if it be not downright Blasphemy; it certainly maketh very near Approaches to it *.

But, you will say, where was God's impartial Goodness in with-holding from others those Advantages, which he has afforded us? If a Revelation were wanted, why was not that, which was equally wanted by all, made equally known to all, at all Times?

If we trace this Argument to it's Original, we shall find it stands on a wrong Foundation: It supposes the Deity to be determined by the *Wants* of Men, *exclusively* of all other Regards: Whereas what may be very fit, the Wants of Men singly

* I would not be thought to depreciate Reason in general, which, rightly understood, as taking in all Help, and Evidences, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is the only Faculty we have to discern Truth from Falshood. It is no more a Disparagement to Reason to assert, it can do little in religious Affairs without the help of *Revelation*; than to maintain, it would make a slender Figure without the Assistances of *Education*: For what is Revelation but Assurances and Instructions from *Heaven*; as Education is Instruction communicated to us from our *Fellow Creatures*? Deduct those religious Truths that were discovered to us, and only place those down, that were discovered by us; and the remaining Sum of our Knowledge, at the foot of the Account, will not be very considerable.

considered;

considered ; may be unfit upon the Whole, all Circumstances and Considerations being laid together. Thus consider the Necessities of a poor Man *separately*, and you may think it proper he should be relieved : But if you know he will abuse your Charity in Drunkenness, and do himself or others some Prejudice, the Fitness ceaseth. Here then the Fallacy lieth. We form our Judgment of what God ought to do upon one single View of the Necessities of Men ; where several other Particulars ought to be taken into the Account to make our Reasoning just and exact. We know not, for Instance, whether an Attempt to remedy the Disadvantages of those, who want a Revelation, might not be attended with greater Disadvantages to them : Whether they might not inflame their Account by rejecting it, if offered ; or abusing it, if received. He alone, who sees through the whole Plan of the Creation, who knows before-hand the different Tempers and Dispositions of all Mankind, in all Ages and Nations, and the various Consequences that would arise from every possible Manner, of acting at every Period of Time ; knew alone, at what Period of

O 3 Time,

Time, to what Ages and Nations it was proper to give a Revelation. God then might be equally willing at all Times to make a fuller Manifestation of his Will (for some Traces and Remains of a Revelation Men still had :) But Men might not at all Times be equally disposed and qualified to receive it.

I answer farther, that it might as well be objected, why has not God given to all Men equal *inward* Abilities to discover the Truth; as why he has not given to all Men equal *external* Evidences. The Answer is the same to both Objections, viz. that God is not obliged to deal *equally* with all his Creatures in the Dispensation of his Favours, having a Right to do what he will with his own: It is enough to vindicate his moral Character, that he will deal *equitably* with them according to the Improvement of their respective Talents, compensating for some People's want of Knowledge, whether natural or revealed, by making favourable *Allowances* to them, and balancing the superior Advantages of others, by making larger *Demands* from them, and requiring no more of *any* Person than he has given him sufficient *Means* to

know

know and Ability to perform. Let us ba-
lance the Account. To the Christians

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greater Knowledge—greater Duty—
greater Difficulty—greater Reward, if
they do well—greater Punishments, if
ill. To the Heathens less Light—less
Duty—less Reward if they do well—
less Punishment if ill.

Thus all seeming Inequalities are ad-
justed. Where the Difficulty of the Con-
quest is the greatest, there the Triumph
ought to be the most glorious, and the
Prize most valuable. If those, who have
the most clear and distinct Notices of their
Duty, will be more severely punished for
their Crimes than others; it is but equita-
ble, that they should be entitled to superior
Rewards, when their Practice in some
Measure keeps Pace with their Know-
ledge: Otherwise, Knowledge would be
a great Misfortune, and Darkness better
than Light.

That Reason therefore is so far sufficient;
as to enable Men to procure as much Hap-
piness here and hereafter, as God, accord-
ing to the Variety of his Dispensations to
Creatures, whether of the same or a dif-
ferent Order, has, in his comprehensive

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Wisdom, thought fit, and that none will be accountable for invincible Ignorance; this we readily grant: But that Reason is so unlimitedly sufficient, as to discover without the Assistance of God all those beneficial and spiritual Truths, which are revealed; and to procure, without the Merits of Christ, all that Happiness which is promised to Christians; this we deny.

God may diversify his Creation, as he pleases, his manifold Wisdom may bring upon the Theatre of Nature, Variety of Creatures, under unequal Circumstances, consistently with his Goodness; provided he has put it in every one's Power to make his Happiness prepollent and superior to his Misery in the Whole of his Existence. But this God may have done, without having Recourse to levelling Principles, without being obliged to put Heathens and Christians; any more than he has put Men and Angels, on the same Foot.

The main Stress of the Question then lyes here. Whether, notwithstanding the distinguishing Advantages of some Creatures above others, it be not enough to vindicate God's Goodness, that he has formed no Creature whatever, whether Angel or Man,
Christian

Christian or Heathen, but what has sufficient Means to make the Sum of his Happiness exceed that of his Misery, either here or hereafter? If they say, this is not sufficient; they are not Deists but something worse; they set aside that Principle, which seems to account for that Disproportion of Happiness in the World, so visible in the Scale of Beings rising one above another, from the meanest Insect to the highest Archangel. If they say, it is sufficient; the same Reason, which justifieth God in giving Angels greater Degrees of Knowledge and Bliss, than Men; will justify him too in giving Christians a larger Allotment of both than Heathens. For there is the same Principle to vindicate God in both Cases, *viz.* every one's Enjoyments will, if it be not their own Fault, over-balance their Unhappiness: Therefore the Conclusion ought to be the same, *viz.* God is equally justified in both Cases. When once his Goodness has designed every Creature, who is not wanting to himself, a *Preponderancy* of Bliss; his unerring Wisdom may dispose of the *Surplus*, that remains beyond this, as he thinks fit. Whereas, according to the Supposition of the Deists, there must

must have been, a dull undistinguished Sameness in every Oeconomy of Providence, without any Regard to the different Dispositions of Mankind, at different Periods of Time: Every Procedure of God must have been, from Eternity to Eternity, only a different Edition of the same unvaried Design without any new Additions.

I have already, in a former Discourse, shewn the superior Advantages and intrinsic Excellency of revealed Religion and the Scriptures, *Ist*, as to the Manifestation of the divine Nature; and *IIly*, as to the beautiful Plan of Morality contained in them, together with those Motives and Encouragements, by which they have supported and enforced that Plan.

It was not improper to remove the Objection, which I have been considering; before I entered upon my *III^d* Head, to which I now proceed, *viz.* to consider the Force of the Argument, which may be drawn from the intrinsic Excellency of the Scriptures in Favour of their divine Inspiration.

To what was it owing, that the *Jewish* Writers should have such lovely and great Ideas of God, and such just Notions of the

the Worship due to him, far above any Thing which we meet with in the Writings of the greatest Lights of the Heathen World; every one of which either patronized Idolatry, or fell into Errors of worse Consequence. Can it be accounted for by the Force of natural or human Assistances? No, the eminent Philosophers of Athens and Rome equalled them, it is certain, in natural Abilities; and exceeded them confessedly in the Superstructures of acquired Knowledge, and all the Advantages of a refined Education. It must be therefore owing to some supernatural or divine Helps; and none, but He, in whom are contained all the Treasures of Wisdom, could have enriched their Minds to such a Degree, and furnished such a vast Expence of Thought. If *Judea* was ennobled by these exalted Notions, of which other Nations, who were sunk into the Dregs of Polytheism and Idolatry, were destitute; if the kindly Dew of Heaven descended on this Fleece only, while all the Earth around betrayed a Want of refreshing Moisture; this was the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvelous in our Eyes.

Had

Had God revealed himself to the Greeks, or some other Nation famed for their curious Researches into every Branch of Literature, and for the Depths of Wisdom and Policy; those Truths, which were so many Emanations from the great Fountain of Light, would have been looked upon as the Result of their Penetration, and their own Discoveries: But by communicating his Will to a People of no inventive and enterprizing Genius, of no enlarged Reach and Compass of Thought; such Suspicions are avoided, and the Proofs of a Revelation more conspicuous and illustrious. And this may be one Reason among others, why at a Time that the rest of the World were bigotted to Superstition, Idolatry, and a false Religion, God singled out this Nation, in that Point not so corrupt as others, to be the Guardian and Depositary of the true.

If nothing recommended the Scripture but this single Consideration, that all those collected Beams of spiritual Light center in it alone, which were widely diffused amidst a Variety of Treatises, and lost amidst a Crowd of palpable Absurdities; even this would be no improbable Argument of

it's Divinity : But this is not all : Let us, SERMON
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in order to compile an adequate unerring
Standard of religious Truths, take in all the
Assistances we can get from all the Philoso-
phers in *Greece*, from *Tully* at *Rome*, nay
even from *Confucius* as far as *China* ; and
yet, after all, the Scheme will be defective
in, what the Scriptures have recommended,
a pure rational Worship of God only in
Spirit and in Truth, a Fulness of Pardon
for every Sin upon Repentance, and the
Nobleness of the Rewards hereafter. The
Love of God will not be required in so
high a Degree, as it is in the Scriptures ;
nor enforced by so strong a Motive, as our
Saviour's dying for Mankind has done ; nor
our Charity and Love to the Distressed re-
commended by so powerful an Incentive, as
that our Redeemer has made them his Re-
presentatives, and will place to his own
Account, whatever was done for his Sake
to them.

One may challenge any Man to produce
before Christianity, among the Heathen
World, such a compleat System of Mora-
lity, reaching all the Duties of Life, with-
out any Defect ; and *full* without *overflow-*
ing, or any Redundancy, as the Scriptures
contain.

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contain. Very remarkable are the Words
 of Mr. Locke. * "It is true, *physic*,
 " there is a Law of Nature: But who is
 " there, that ever did or undertook to
 " give it us all entire as a Law, no more,
 " nor no less than what was contained in
 " and had the Obligation of that Law?
 " Who ever made out all the Parts of it,
 " put them together, and shewed the World
 " their Obligation? Where was there any
 " such Code, that Mankind might have
 " Recourse to as their userring Rule, whe
 " fore our Saviour's Time? Such a Law
 " of Morality Jesus Christ hath given us
 " in the New Testament. — And such a
 " one, out of the New Testament, I think
 " the World never had, nor can any one
 " say is elsewhere to be found. And a
 " gain, " If you sent Men to the Sayings of
 " the Wise, and the Declarations of the
 " Philosophers, you sent them into a wild
 " Wood of Uncertainty, to an endless
 " Maze, from which they should never
 " get out; if to the Religions of the World,
 " yet worse: And if to their own Reason,
 " you refer them to that, which had some
 " Light and Certainty, but yet had his

* See Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.

" therto

"therto failed all Mankind in a perfect SERMON
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"Rule, and resolved not the Doubts that
"had risen among the studious and think-
"ing Philosophers; nor had yet been able
"to convince the civilized Part of Man-
"kind, that they had not given, nor could,
"without a Crime, take away the Lives
"of their Children, by exposing Them."

It is needless to tell any Man of plain
Sense, that there must be always a *Proportion*
between the *Cause* and the *Effect*.
Now, if we *exclude* the *divine* Power,
what Proportion can we find between the
Causes of Christianity, and *Christianity* it-
self? Christianity is a *Religion*, which has
disabused the World, and rescued it from
those many vicious Practices, such as the
Exposing of Infants, Polygamy, &c. which
were universally defended among the Pa-
gans, and from human Sacrifices, and from
innumerable abominable and brutal Rites;
a Religion so perfective of *human* Nature,
and so expressive of the *divine*; that we
want Ideas to carry us to a *Conception* of
any Thing beyond it. And who were the
Authors or *Causes* of this Religion? Why,
a Set of Men bred up in low Life to mean
Employments, which *cramp* the native
Powers

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think that a Set of *unlettered, unenterprising* Men could open several rich Mines of Truth, which had escaped the laborious *Researches* of the profoundest *Scholars*, and the happy *Sagacity* of the most penetrating *Wits*?

Since therefore every *Effect* must have a *competent and proportionable Cause*; and since the supposed *natural Causes* and *Authors* of Christianity considered as *mere Men* exclusive of divine Inspiration, were plainly *unequal* to the Task, nor could ever have brought to Light, such *Doctrines*, as exceeded whatever the *Philosophers* before had done; though, laying aside their *Dregs*, we should draw off the very *Flower* and *Spirit* of their *Writings*: It is evident, we must have Recourse to some *supernatural and adequate Cause*, which interested itself in this *Affair*: And to whom, but to the *Father of Light*, in whom there is *no Darknefs at all*, can we be indebted; that now *Persons* of the *slenderest Capacities* may view those elevated and beneficial *Truths* in the strongest *Point of Light*, which the *finest Spirits* of the *Gentile World* could not before fully ascertain; that our
meanest

meanest Mechanics, with a moderate Share of Application, may have juster and fuller Notions of God's Attributes, of eternal Happiness, of every Duty respecting their Maker, Mankind, and themselves; than the most *distinguished* Scholars among the Heathens could attain to, after a *Life* laid out in painful *Researches*?

Christianity has been a *Light to lighten* the Deists, as well as *the Glory*, Happiness, and Salvation of every good Christian. Even they, who decry Revelation, are greatly indebted to it, for much clearer and more enlarged Views of Things; than they could have had, if bred up in Countries altogether unenlightened by it. Even they enjoy the Benefits and *gather* the *Fruits* of Christianity, at the same Time that they are maliciously striving to *damage* and wound the *Tree* which bears them.

The Maintainers of the Sufficiency of human Reason are, as to this Point, very much distressed: Strange! that *Reason without Revelation* should be a *sufficient* Guide, when they cannot prove, that it has conducted any *one* Man in any one *Age* or *Nation*, no not even *Socrates* himself,

to a *full* unerring *Standard* of *Duty*. How happened it then, that the Authors of the Scriptures should *alone*, of all Mankind, have *Sense* enough to form an *adequate* Scheme of *Duty*, *Courage* enough to set on Foot the *Propagation* of it, and *Perseverance* enough to bring it to *bear*, notwithstanding all the Engines of worldly Power were play'd against them? How comes it, that all succeeding Writers have not been able to discover one important religious Truth, but what is either expressly contained in the Bible, or is implied in it, and may be fairly deduced from it? All that succeeding Writers have done, has been only to state and limit the Doctrines, to collect, adjust, and range in a more exact Chain of Reasoning, those religious and moral Observations, which lye scattered in the Scripture with a noble Profusion. Just as the utmost Skill of Mankind cannot form *one new Plant*: They may indeed *prune*, *cultivate*, and place in a regular *Symmetry* and *Order*, those Trees, as well as those Flowers, which are sown in a beautiful Disorder by the Author of Nature. These Things are only thus to be accounted for, *viz.* That God who does
nothing

nothing in vain, but is not wanting in what is necessary, imprinted on their Minds these comprehensive Truths, but left it to them to express them in what Language and Order they thought proper. It was not necessary, that God should *beautify* the sacred Writings with all the *Elegancies* of *Language* and *Method*; it was enough that he has *enriched* them with an inexhaustible Fund of *useful Truths*. They needed not the *Spectacles* of Books, whose Eyes God himself opened, to discern and reveal these wondrous Things.

Unlettered Men, in attempting to reveal the deep Things of God, must have fallen into palpable Absurdities, unless they had been directed by that Spirit, which *searcheth all Things, yea the deep Things of God*. For even *lettered* Men, speculative Adventurers of the strongest and brightest Parts, whenever they have, without the Help of Revelation, made Excursions into the World of Spirits, have discovered nothing but their Ignorance, and Liableness to gross Mistakes. Men, who *were not* under the Power of an ungoverned Imagination, would scarce have sallied out into Subjects, where our Faculties can find no sure Footing; and

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Men, who *were*, could never have worked out such a plausible and consistent Scheme, as our Faculties cannot confute. How comes it then, that the sacred Writers, in setting before us the Nature and Offices of good and bad Angels, the Joys of Heaven, &c. have kept clear of all flagrant Errors, for any Thing that we can make out to the contrary? How comes it, that all Inquirers after them, have been unable to prove any Thing relating to these Points, which they have *not said*; and to disprove any Thing, which they *have said*? How comes it, if they were uninspired, that, though they have delivered several Doctrines, which Reason cannot ascertain; yet they *say* nothing which Reason can *gainsay*, upon Subjects, to which our Faculties are disproportioned, and as to which we are therefore most subject to Absurdities?

Add to this, that we have a vital Sense of the Goodness of Christianity. No Body that heartily believed in our Saviour, and acted agreeably to his Precepts, ever repented that he had done so: Thousands have felt a Remorse and Compunction of Soul, that they have not been *altogether* Christians. The more a Man has been a sincere
and

and sound Christian; the more Peace and Sunshine of Mind he has felt in himself, and the more Confidence he has expressed towards God. For this sensible Experience of the Goodness and Truth of Christianity we have the united Suffrages of Men of distinguished Piety, from the first Birth of Christianity, down to the present Times. Several of them enjoyed as much Peace as this World can give; and all of them that Peace which it cannot give. He certainly acts most agreeably to the Will of the Deity, and to (what is inseparably connected with his Will) the Truth of Things, who embraces and adheres to that Religion, which will make him, the meekest, humblest, the most benevolent, pious, and, in all Respects, the best Man; which gives him the most astonishing, yet the most amiable Views of the Divinity, and the most rational and interesting Account of Heaven and Hell; which contains, whatever God, through a diffusive Goodness, has done for Mankind; and what Mankind have yet to do for themselves, to *work out their Salvation*.

The intrinsic Excellency of Christianity, I am afraid, has given many the greatest

Dislike for it. For I never could assign any Reason, why *Mahometans* and *Papists* (great Numbers of Them) seem to be very much *in earnest* about their Religions; but *We* (too many of us) very *remiss* and indifferent to Ours, but this very bad one, *viz.* that those Religions chiefly consist in, and lay too great Stress upon, *outward* Acts and *little* Observances; Whereas true Christianity descends deep, into the *Heart*, *converting the Soul*, and indispensably enjoins an unreserved Obedience to God, and an *inward* Relish of Goodness *rooted in our Minds*, and influencing our Practice throughout. Now Men would rather undergo innumerable *bodily* Austerities, and observe all the *Outside* of Piety; than cultivate an universal and *unsullied Purity of Heart*. A *Self-Indulgence* as to that Sin which most easily besets us, be it Vanity, spiritual Pride, Lust, or any other Vice, gives us so great Pleasure, that *no Self-Denials*, as to other Points, can countervail it, if they can be *called* Self-Denials. For then we *effectually* deny ourselves, when we refrain from those darling, but unlawful Pleasures, whether of Body or Mind, to which we have the strongest Bias. A pure undefiled Religion

of the Scriptures, a Proof, &c. 215

Religion coming from God, the great SERMON
VII. Searcher of Hearts, requires this Sacrifice of the Heart, without which no other Sacrifices, no external Performances, however seemingly difficult, will be of any Avail. A Religion commanding us to be as strict and *regular* in our Lives, as the *Pharisee* in our Saviour's beautiful Parable, and yet as humble and *unpretending* as the *Publican*, was worthy of God; but we, by raising idle Cavils against it, make our selves unworthy of it.

A complete System of moral and religious Truths, comprehending every Thing that has a Tendency to purify a rational Mind, and to qualify it for everlasting Bliss, seems to be a Work beyond the Powers of any *unenlightened Man*, the Excellency of whose Writings, whatever considerable and important Truths they might contain, to shew he was a *bright* and *able* Man; would be adulterated with impure Mixtures, and debased by coarse Alloys of Errors, perhaps of a dangerous Nature, (not to mention many Omissions), to prove he was a *mere* Man: Much more was such a Scheme above the Abilities of *uneducated* Men. There seems to be something in *Man's*

P 4 Nature,

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Nature, which disqualifies him from forming a Religion *for himself*, without taking in any Assurances from *Heaven*. And whoever has set about it, has either *curtailed* and maimed it, *leaving out* some important Duties, which is the Case of *Deism*; or he has blended it with *spurious* and superstitious *Additions*, which is the Case of Popery. Those who want to have the modelling of Religion in their own Hands, are like the Countryman in the Fable, who requested the Management of the Weather as he pleased : They had much better leave that Affair to his Direction, who alone can order all Things for the best. As long as a *Deity* is *acknowledged*, Religion must subsist in some Shape or other ; and one cannot well conceive, how it can subsist in a *better* than it does at present. Take a Survey of all confessedly *human* Inventions; and you will find, that when compared with *Christianity*, they *have no Glory by Reason of the Glory, that excelleth*.

Difficulties indeed and Obscurities there are in Scripture, as well as *other ancient Books* : But then we must distinguish between Difficulties which affect the *main Design* of a Revelation; and those of a *slighter*

of the Scriptures, a Proof, &c. 217

slighter and less momentous Nature. Not-^{SERMON}
withstanding the Charge of Difficulties and ^{VII.}
Obscurities; the Scripture, though *deep*,
is *clear* in every Doctrine, that tends to the
Glory of God, the Good of Mankind,
and the Benefit of our own Souls. *So far*
God has gone; and *farther* than this he
needed not go, to answer the End of a
Revelation. Whatever *Things* there are
in it *hard to be understood*, which a mode-
rate Application cannot clear up; they may
exercise the Abilities of the *Curious*, but
are not necessary to edify the *Bulk of Man-*
kind. Any Man, who *diligently* and im-
partially *searches the Scriptures*, comparing
Place with Place, interpreting the *darker*
Passages by the *clearer*, and attending to
the *Scope* and *Design* of the Author; may
furnish himself with an intelligible, *con-*
sistent, and *determinate Rule of Faith* and
Practice, may derive from thence Hopes
full of a blessed Immortality; and find
there that beautiful *Assemblage* of moral
Truths, *clear* and *unmixed*; which lye
scattered through the Writings of *all* the
Philosophers, and are *blended*, in them, with
pernicious Errors. Whatever Precept is
briefly and in general Terms delivered in
one

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one Place, is more clearly and distinctly unfolded in another: And no *important* Doctrine is founded only on *one* Text; it is inculcated in *several*, and placed before us in various *Views* and *Reviews*; like some beautiful and masterly Statue placed in a Garden, in which several Openings terminate, and conspire to let us see it in Variety of Lights. Which Consideration makes it impossible for any one, who has a *wrong* Hypothesis to *serve*, to *endeavour*, if he be not *lost* to all Sense of *Shame*, to obtrude *such* a Translation upon the Public, as shall not contain a sufficient *Antidote* for any fundamental Error.

Disputes, it is true, there will always be about Scripture, a Gift not designed for such an Use, as there have been about *every* Thing *else*. And is it a Wonder, Men should dispute about *Religion*, which is almost the *only* Thing, about which it is *worth while* to dispute at all? If Religion were set aside, would *all* *Disputes* immediately cease? No, there would be *many more*, which a serious Sense of it upon our Minds prevents, about Things of *less* Importance, about every Thing on which Men had misplaced their Esteem. It is a
Mistake

Mistake to imagine, that the *Obscurity* of SERMON
VII. *Scripture* has given Birth to different *Opinions* in *material* Points; Men's preconceived *Opinions* have made them endeavour to *obscure* and darken the *Scripture*, though never so plain. However, supposing the Translation to be just and faithful in the Main, which it is allowed by all competent Judges to be, the Unlearned may distinguish between *torturing* the Words of inspired Writers, pressing them into their Service, and *compelling them to come in*, in Favour of some darling Notion; and on the other Hand, giving them an *easy, unforced, and natural* Interpretation. They may easily perceive, who *impose* a *Sense* upon the Bible making it speak *their own*; and who are content to *take* one from it.

Little Minds may be affected with little *Trifles*, with some minute Particularity in *Scripture*, with some Text that seems unaccountable: They may examine the Bible (to use the Allusion of a great Genius) as it were with a Microscope, which confines them to a *single Part*; but does not enable them to take in the *Consistency* of the *Whole*, or to perceive the *Relation* which *each Part* has to *another*. A Mind truly large and comprehensive

comprehensive will grasp the *whole Compass* and *Substance* of Christianity, and consider, how happily it has supplied the Defects, rectified the Mistakes, and enforced the Discoveries of human Reason; carrying Religion to such a just Degree of Perfection, that whatever falls *short* of it, is jejune and *defective*; and whatever *attempts* to go *beyond* it, is visionary and *romantic*. The more a Man studies the Scriptures with these extensive Views, the more he will admire them: For they are like those Persons, whom an intimate *Acquaintance endears* more and more, whatever Prejudices we might, at *first Sight*, have conceived against them.

Here is a Book which takes in a *vast* Compass: It begins *from* Eternity, with the Creation of the World, and the Formation of Man; and ends *in* Eternity, with the last Judgment, and the Consummation of all Things. And yet, throughout, there is one Chain and regular Series of well-connected Events, from the Fall to the Redemption; and from the Redemption to the last grand Revolution, when *all Things shall be put under* our Saviour's Feet. Amidst this great *Variety*, there is,
just

just as in the Works of Nature, an *Uni-*<sup>SERMON
VII.</sup>*formity*; every Thing is *diversified*, and yet every Thing *regular*. From the *first* Institution of *Sacrifices* immediately after the Fall, through several intermediate Steps, to the grand *universal* Sacrifice, which they prefigured, of our Saviour, one uniform Design is carried on, *viz.* the Preservation of true Religion in the World, and the discountenancing of Vice and Idolatry. Now in a Book comprehending such a Train of Dispensations, and such a vast Extent of Time, wrote in several *Ag*es, by several *Hands*, and on several *Subjects*; it is *not* at all *surprising*, that there should be *many* Things puzzling and unaccountable to us short-sighted Creatures, (for such there are in the Works of the Creation); but *it is amazing*, supposing the Authors of it were not under the immediate Guidance of God, that, notwithstanding the *strictest* Scrutiny has been made, notwithstanding *every particular* Passage has been sifted, no one *material Flaw* has been discovered, that has *endangered* the whole *Fabric*. Nay those very Things, which were *thought insuperable* Objections against it; have, upon a closer Examination, been found

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found illustrious *Confirmations* of the Truth of it. Do you think that the *Mahometan*, the *Pagan*, or any other false Religion, could have stood their Ground; if Reason had had as fair Play against *them*, as it has had against *Christianity*; if the whole *Artillery* of *reasoning Malice*, resolved to leave no Stone unturned, and to find or make Objections at any Rate, had been, for many Ages, discharged against them? *Falshood* cannot long bear the Shock of an unrestrained, determined, and powerful *Opposition*; and *Truth* itself must greatly suffer, by having all the Weapons of Ridicule and Sophistry employed against it, in the Opinion of (a considerable Number) the half-thinking, injudicious, and inattentive. And if all the Load of Objections and Difficulties industriously raised, like so many Weights tied about a Body, cannot sink Christianity; it must be upheld and supported by that Energy of Truth, which is stronger than all Things, and will prevail.

If there were *one decisive unanswerable Argument against Christianity*, which wounded it in it's Vitals; it would be unaccountable, why disinterested Men, of distinguished

distinguished Penetration, great Masters of Reason, who had thoroughly weighed and understood the Nature of Evidence, should have inviolably adhered to it, and professed their Belief of it to *the last*, and *more at last*, than ever. But it is not at all unaccountable, why some few inquisitive Men, notwithstanding the decisive Arguments for it, should have disbelieved it, or at least endeavoured to disbelieve it. Because Men of very good Understandings may have criminal, and over violent Attachments, to the Things of this World: And very slender and precarious Reasonings will go a great Way, when Men have a strong Interest, and therefore a strong Inclination, to be Disbelievers: But the Things concerning Religion, relate chiefly to another World, are distant, and out of Sight: And Men have seldom, if ever, so strong a Bias that Way as not to allow Reason a fair Hearing.

Many are the Devices of a Man's Heart; but the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Many have been the Devices of Men's Hearts and Heads against Christianity; From it's Youth up have they fought against it: But it is the Counsel of the Lord, and

therefore *has* hitherto stood, and *will* maintain it's Ground.

But to what, you will say, is the Growth of Infidelity owing? Is it not to this, that the Age is *more inquisitive* and *discerning*, and consequently *less* credulous? Alas! The *Spring* of Credulity is not *dried* up; it only flows in *another Channel*. Witness *many Impositions* upon the Public: Witness *those Schemes*, which, within our Memories, have impoverished, if not ruined, several Families. Those, who will not consult the immortal Welfare of their *Souls*, who will not be Adventurers for another better World, upon the sure Bottom of the *Word of God*, how strongly soever attested; yet will trust their *Bodies* in the Hands of an *illiterate Pretender to Physick*. If Men be *more scrupulous* of Assent in religious Matters, *too liable to Fraud and Imposition in others*; the Reason, I suppose, may, without much Difficulty, be assigned: It is not that we are *less credulous*; we are only *more vicious*. Credulity is still the same: The *Objects*, on which it is placed, are only *changed* and diversified. And though *implicit Belief* might be the Fault of former Ages, when Popery prevailed;
implicit

implicit Disbelief is the reigning Folly of ^{SERMON} the present. There is the same Quantity ^{VII.} of Folly still, just as there is of Matter; and, like Matter, it admits of different Modifications, and appears in Variety of Forms. There is no surer Way of judging, of the *Sense* and Discernment of an *Age*, than by observing the public *Entertainments*, which are most in *Vogue*. And, if so, then let it be observed, that Christianity *decayed*, in an Age and Nation where *Taste* and *Sense* were at the *lowest Ebb*; where every rational Entertainment was discouraged, and low fantastic Performances, without the least Tincture of just-Thinking, Morality, and Wit, usurped the Room of them.

The Cause of Infidelity is obvious: It is *Luxury*, which, wherever it got Footing, never failed to erase all religious Impressions. Thus it was in *Greece*; thus in *Rome* of old, when the *sensless* System of *Epicurus* was patronized by Men of much greater and more eminent *Abilities*, than Any, that now espouse *Infidelity*. Thus it was even in *Judæa* itself, when the Sect of the *Sadducees* prevailed. It may be thought, that the great Number of bad

226 *The intrinsic Excellency, &c.*

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and poisonous Books, has occasioned the great Looseness and Depravation of the Age: But the Truth is, the Looseness and Depravation of the Age, to which bad Writers will always accommodate themselves to give a *current* Value to those Works, which want an *intrinsic* one, has occasioned the Number of poisonous Writings: Not to mention, that they are generally very despicable Authors, almost all, except one, whom one is sorry to see in such bad Company; one, who whatever fine Talents he had, was never remarkable for close and solid Reasoning.

A long uninterrupted Flow of Ease and Tranquillity has lulled us into a fatal Indolence and Insensibility to all religious Notices: Some *signal Judgment*; some *extraordinary* Indication of the divine Displeasure, seems almost necessary to purge the Nation of it's Dross, to *rouse it* into a serious *Sense* of Religion, and make us discern and value those Things, *that belong to our Peace, before they be hidden* from our Eyes: Just as when the Sky is full of noxious and pestilential Vapours; some violent Hurricane, some dreadful Bursts of Thunder are necessary to disperse them, to clear the infected Air, and restore it to it's former Serenity.

Eight

Eight SERMONS

On the Evidences of Christianity, the
Corruption of our Nature; the
Redemption, and the TRINITY.

Preached at the Lady Moyer's Lecture, in
the Cathedral of St. Paul, London, in
the Years 1732 and 1733.

S E R M O N I.

On the Truth of Christianity.

JOHN III. 2.

*Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher
come from God: For no Man can do these
Miracles, that thou doest, except God be
with him.*

THE Proposition contained in the SERMON
Text is, that some Miracles are ^{1.}
so circumstanced, as to be direct
Evidences of a divine Power. By a Mi-
Q 2racle,

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 I.
 miracle, is meant an Effect evident to the Senses, contrary to the fixed and established Course of Nature. Strange! that *Man* should disbelieve an Operation *different* from the *present Course* of Nature; when *Man* himself, the *first Man*, from whom all the rest descended, could not have been brought into Being, but by an Act of Power *different* from the *Course* of *Nature*, as it is now *established*. For some *first Man* there must be: And, whoever he was, he must be brought upon the Theatre of Nature *without Parents*, without any *second Causes*, by the *immediate* Power and Will of the *first*, or, in other Words, by an Operation, which, if it were not, strictly speaking, a Miracle; was, at least, equivalent to one.

Nor is it at all improbable, that He, who called Man into *Being*, by a *particular* Display of Power, distinct from those *general Laws*, which obtain at *present*; would exert some *unusual* and uncommon Acts of Power for (what was of greater Importance than his mere Being) his *Well-Being*, his *eternal Well-Being*.

In the Prosecution of this Subject,

Ist, I shall

I/ſ, I ſhall attempt to ſhew, that ſeveral SERMON
Miracles are deciſive Proofs of a divine I.
Power.

Idly, That we have ſufficient Evidence,
that ſuch Miracles were wrought for the
Confirmation of Religion.

I/ſ, I ſhall attempt to ſhew, that ſeveral
Miracles are deciſive Proofs of a divine
Power.

What Powers evil Spirits may have,
and what is the utmoſt Extent of *their*
Abilities; it is beyond the Extent of *ours*,
in all Caſes, to determine: But that God
would ſuffer them to exert thoſe Powers
in working ſuperior and uncontrouled Mi-
racles; this I cannot admit: Becauſe God
is too good to permit ſuch a *Snare* to be
laid for the Bulk of Mankind, who will
be always governed more by what affects
their Senſes, than by thoſe Arguments,
which addreſs themſelves coldly to their
Underſtandings. *Striking* and *pompous* Mi-
racles, though they enforced a Doctrine
ſeemingly abſurd, would dazzle and over-
power the Soul, and force an Admittance
for it into the Mind: Whereas dry and

abstracted Reasonings operate but slowly and languidly in Comparifon. He, who could raife the Dead, and fufpend the Laws of Nature, would convince the Generality of Men much fooner, than if he brought feveral Mathematical Demonftrations to fupport, what he advanced.

I cannot then believe, that God would permit evil Beings to work confiderable Miracles, without afferting the Superiority of his Power; becaufe this would unavoidably miflead the Grofs of the Species into Error. I cannot likewise believe it, for another Reason, becaufe it would invalidate and weaken the ftrongeft Proofs of his Providence.

For either we muft fay, that *no finite Effects* whatever bear the Imprefs of the Deity, and prove an infinite Being at the Helm, (which is to difcard all the Arguments *a posteriori*;) or fuch *aftonifhing Notices of Power*, as our Saviour and Moſes, and others gave, bid as fair for the Proof of it, as any *Phænomena*.

For why may we not as well believe, that finite Beings are empowered to make the Sun, or rather Planets, *revolve* in their Orbit, and go their everlaſting Round; as

that they are empowered to *arrest* the Course of the Sun (or the Earth,) make it go *backwards*, or eclipse it, when the Moon is at the full? Let us consider the Case of *Joshua* stopping the Sun. If the Laws, by which the material World is governed, be nothing, as is generally agreed, but God's *standing* and *uniform* Operation upon Matter; I ask, did God suspend his Action upon the Sun, when it was stopped; or did he not? If he did, then he wrought the Miracle; for the Miracle was nothing but the Suspension of the Laws of Nature; but if he did not, if he still continued his regular Action; then it seems, there was another Being concerned, who over-ruled his Power, or at least kept it at a Bay; and thus Polytheism will be unavoidable.

The same Kind of Reasoning may be applied to other miraculous Facts. I could as soon believe, that evil Spirits might *call* me *into* Being, and set the *Springs* of Nature a *going at first*; as that they can *raise* me when dead, *reanimate* a Lump of senseless Matter, and remand my Soul, when it is in the Hand of God, to it's former Lodging thus refitted up. No Creature can come into, or be restored to Being,

but by him, who is the Fountain of all Beings.

He that had Power to create *Bread* two several Times, to satisfy some thousands, might have Power to create the *whole World*; there being no more Impossibility in the one, than in the other. Either then creative and providential Powers are no divine Powers; or else these Effects likewise bear the Stamp of the Deity.

If the Sick may be healed, and the Deaf made to hear by an inferior Being; can the Maimed be made whole, (*Matthew xv. 31.*) or a lost Limb restored? He, who produced and preserves that infinitely complicated Engine, the human *Body*, can alone form or restore any *Member* of it. For in *each* Member of it there is a curious Interweaving of endless Fibres, there are continual Streams running to and from each Part of it, through an Infinity of Canals, to convey Nutrition throughout: Each Member maintains a constant Correspondence with the Head and the Heart; it is the Instrument or Occasion of exciting certain Sensations in the Soul, and is enabled, by an incredible Activity, to execute her Orders, as soon as she issues them out, and
wills

will the Motion of the Hand or Foot, or SERMON
any other Part: A Power to be derived I.
only from Him, who *commands*, and it is
immediately done.

It may be of some Importance to in-
quire, whether it is consistent with God's
Wisdom to intrust any Beings, much less
evil ones, with such ample Powers, as to
reserve to himself no distinctive Characters
of his own Power; whether this is not to
give up the most valuable Branches of his
Prerogative, and in Effect to unking him-
self: Whether this would not be the Case,
if evil Spirits might perform all the Mira-
cles recorded from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*.
For if no such *supernatural* Notices, no
such undeniable *Change* of Nature, carry
evident Marks and Impressions of the Dei-
ty; then the *consistent uniform* Workings
of God, according to established Laws,
cannot prove the Deity; and if they can-
not prove it, then we are left, to all Ap-
pearance, in a *fatherless* and forlorn World.
We may then be as sure that such Mira-
cles could be wrought by none but God,
as we are, that the World is governed by
God;

But

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I.

But farther, the Argument for the Unity of God is this, that *one* Being is *sufficient* to produce all the *Phænomena* in Nature, and therefore we have no Occasion to suppose any *more but one*: Which Argument is enforced by the *similis Ratio*, Analogy, and Harmony, which runs throughout Nature, as far as the Sphere of our Observation extends. But if another Being can give as glaring Indications of Power, in a supernatural Manner, as are shewn in the ordinary Course of Nature, if he can break through that *similis Ratio* and Harmony; then this Argument is dismissed as inconclusive. For the Manifestation of two distinct equal Powers must lead us to the Acknowledgment of two distinct equal Beings.

The standing Miracle of the *Sabbatical* or seventh Year, well deserves our Consideration, when, the Land lying uncultivated, the Produce of the Earth in one Year (the sixth,) according to *Moses's* Promise, *Lev. xxv. 21.* was to be thrice as much as usual, or Provision for three Years. Now either this Miracle was performed, or not. If not, then the whole Body of the *Jews* must have a flagrant Proof, that their

their Lawgiver was an Impostor, and consequently, must have been so far from believing him, that they would have been a Nation of Infidels. Nay, they could not actually have observed the *Sabbatical* Year, according to his Directions, upon a Failure of his Promise. But if this Miracle was performed, then it must be the Lord's doing: For God would never suffer any evil Spirit, for such a long Tract of Time, for several Centuries, by an oft repeated Exemplification of his Power, to do thrice as much in a supernatural Manner; as he himself did in one Year, in the ordinary Course of his Providence. It is as certain then, that no such Miracles could be wrought by any evil Spirit; as that there are not two distinct independent Beings at the Helm. Where there is an infinite Disproportion of Power between two Beings, there must be some sufficient Marks of Distinction, to ascertain which acts. It cannot therefore be impossible to hit the dividing Point, between the little puny Feats of evil Spirits, and the august Display of divine Power. But if such an uninterrupted Series of unparalleled Miracles as our Saviour did, do not point out to us
the

the appropriate Ensigns of the Deity; what others can we single out as sufficiently and peculiarly expressive of his Majesty? The most astonishing Idea we can conceive of the most astonishing Being that is, is, that he brings about Things, by the mere Act and *Fiat* of his Will, without any tedious, slow, gradual Process; that whatever he *bids*, is finished by his *Bidding*. But behold another, if he were another, usurps his sovereign Stile: *I will, be thou clean. Lazarus, come forth*: It is spoke, it is done: Nature hears his Voice, and, confessing her Author, instantly obeys the dread Command.

Those settled and established Rules, by which God governs the material World, being for the general Good of the Whole, God will never act by particular Wills and Miracles in numerous, open, uncontested Instances; nor will he suffer others to act by them, but for some superior and pre-pollent Good, which cannot be attained but by a Deviation from them. Either then the Miracles were wrought for some superior Good; or they were not. If they were, then there is no absolute Necessity to suppose other Beings concerned: It was not

not beneath the Deity to interpose; it was
no Prostitution of his Power and Dignity,
but an Act of Condescension and Goodness
worthy of himself. If they were not for
some prepollent Good; then he would not
suffer them to be wrought at all: Since
if evil Beings might, for no prepollent
Good, upon no extraordinary Emergency,
interrupt the Course of Nature, and turn
Things into another Channel, all human
Affairs must stand still, all our Industry
must stagnate, and all our Prudence be su-
perfeded. For where every Thing in the
Course of Nature was precarious; where
there was no regular Conduct of Provi-
dence; no regular and well-concerted
Means could be of any Service, to procure
any desirable End, or avert any Evil.
Wisdom and Folly, Carefulness and Idle-
ness, would be upon a Level; if Beings
of a superior Nature were left at large, to
disconcert, unsettle, and embroil every
Thing. I can easily see, that God may
sacrifice the Uniformity and Harmony of
his Providence, upon some uncommon Exi-
gency; the Love of the *Happiness* of his
Creatures being superior to his Love of
Order: But that he should suffer a Set of
evil

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evil Spirits to break through that magnificent Simplicity, and regular Variety, which constitutes Beauty; that he should suffer an Impostor to go on in a continued Series of unrivalled Miracles, to raise the Dead, and himself, to confer the same Powers on his Followers, and to enable them to speak all Languages; and all this with a Design to deceive a Set of Creatures, who may be, and are, every Day deceived, without the Expence of one Miracle; is a Supposition highly injurious to the Wisdom of the Deity, which has given Things a Law, which shall not be broken upon every slight Occasion. 'Tis in *Nature*, as in a *Poem*: The great Author of it may break through set *formal Rules*, when a *greater Beauty* may be compassed by *swerving* from them, than by *scrupulously adbering* to them. But then he will never permit others to break through his regular Adjustment of Things, and blend their own Performances promiscuously with his. I grant that evil invisible Beings may be the Ministers of God's Vengeance, as well as visible Beings are; nay, they are much properer Instruments, as their Intellects are clearer, their Reason more extensive, and their Powers more enlarged.

But

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But all this may be done consistently with SERMON
the Laws of Nature; at least without any I.
notorious uncontrouled Breach of them.

To these Miracles of *Power* we may add Prophecies, which are Miracles of *Knowledge*. Now, how God himself should certainly foresee uncertain Events, is unconceivable by us; but it is absolutely impossible that any such Degree of Knowledge should be lodged in finite Beings. Yet there are several such Prophecies as suppose infallible Knowledge of contingent Events; and, consequently, must be ascribed to God alone. Such is the Prophecy about *Cyrus* by Name, and what he would do, above an hundred Years before he was born, *Isaiab's* Prophecy concerning our Saviour's Sufferings, a Prophecy so very punctual, that, if we were not certain of the contrary, one would suspect that the Author had lived after our Saviour, and had nothing to do but to adjust the Prophecy to the Event. Such is our Saviour's Prediction concerning the unexampled Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of the *Jews*, till the *Fulness of the Gentiles* should come in.

There

There then is no Question, but, if the Miracles were wrought, they were wrought by God himself: Which brings me to the

II^d Point, which was to prove, we have sufficient Evidence the Miracles were actually wrought.

And in Order to this, I need not prove, that the Apostles could not be deceived themselves; since they were Eye-Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles; much less could they be deceived, in the Miracles they themselves performed, particularly in that of the Gift of Tongues. For they must have had as much an *internal Consciousness*, that they could on a sudden speak a Variety of Languages, which they never learned; as they had an internal Consciousness of their own Existence. They must have an intimate Feeling of what passed within them.

My Business shall be to shew,

1st, That the Apostles had no Interest to deceive others, and

2^{dly}, That they could not have deceived Mankind if they would.

1st then I am to prove, That the Apostles had no Interest to deceive others.

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If Christianity was an Imposture, it was a strange Imposture indeed; an Imposture beneficial to the World, but destructive to the Authors, in the Nature and Tendency of the Thing itself: beneficial I say to the World, since it forbade every Vice, and enjoined every Virtue, that could make a Man more happy in himself, more serviceable to the World, and more acceptable to God. But as visibly, in it's genuine Consequences, destructive to the Authors; since they could not expect to disturb publick Settlements, and unhinge national Religions with Impunity; since they knew from the Indignities their Master met with, that they were to promote it at the Expence of whatever was dear and valuable to them in this Life; since the Pagan Priests would every where work up the Dregs of the Populace into a Ferment, against the Propagators of a Religion, which could not take Place but at the Expence of their Interest.

It may be said, the Apostles were actuated by Ambition: They were impatient

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to set themselves above the *undistinguished* Many, and to shew the Superiority of their Parts by dissenting from the Common Herd.

It is granted, that Ambition is sometimes as predominant in the Vulgar, as it is in Men of Letters, or Heroes : But then it operates in a quite different Manner, and flows in another Channel.

For Instance, an ignorant Peasant, who has had a narrow and confined Education, may be desirous to be the Oracle of the Village, in which he lives, and to get and maintain an Ascendant over it. This would probably be the Height of his Ambition : It could never enter into his Head, if he were in his Senses, without the Advantages of a refined Conversation, or the Knowledge of Books, to erect himself into a Teacher of many Nations. The Philosopher indeed might be tempted to enlarge the Scene of Action, and to spread his Fame and Knowledge throughout the World : But a Desire of Distinction in poor unlettered Men of common Sense, is confined within a narrower Sphere, it never prompts them to take the *World* for their *Theatre*, and *Mankind* for their *Audience*.

If

If then the Apostles were Men of common Sense, which is plain from that excellent System of Morality, which they have left us, explained in the clearest Precepts, enforced by the strongest Motives, and exemplified by the brightest Pattern; they could not, were their Passion for Glory never so strong, merely upon the Strength of that Motive, have formed a wild romantic Project of propagating a new Religion among the polite, as well as barbarous Nations, without either Riches or Power to *obtrude* their Sentiments upon the World, or Art and Address to *insinuate* them.

No, if they had not been swayed by a Principle of Obedience to their Creator, and a well-grounded Belief in him, that he would prosper their Endeavour; that Attempt, *viz.* for a few defenceless ignorant Men to change the Religions of all the Earth, by introducing a rational Devotion, and a pure Morality, had been a Kind of *religious Knight Errantry*, which some frantick *Enthusiasts* might have set on foot; but was inconsistent with *their* Character, who spoke the Words of Sobriety and Truth. These then were the true Springs of their Actions, a settled

Conviction of the Truth of the Resurrection, a firm Confidence that they reposed in their Maker and Saviour, and a certain Expectation of heavenly Rewards in Reversion. Had they not believed the Truth of the Resurrection, and that God would give a Sanction to it by Miracles; Vain-Glory, it is certain, could not prompt them to embark in an Attempt which, they could not but foresee, must terminate in their Disgrace and Defeat; they being in themselves very incompetent Instruments, to occasion so great a Revolution in Religion.

Besides, it is plain Ambition could never have been their Motive: Had they indeed pretended to preach and write from their *own Fund* of Sense, and to strike out an intirely *new* Track of Thought, without treading servilely in the Steps of another; then there had been some Colour for taxing them with Vain-Glory: But, instead of this, they disclaim the Vanity of being thought *Originals*: They refer all the Glory of being the *first Author* and Inven-tor of these beneficial Truths to their Lord and Master: He was the *Master Builder* who laid the Plan; they desire only to be

considered as *Under Agents* and Workmen; SERMON I.
a Character, to which ambitious Men are not willing to stoop: They every where make our Saviour the immediate *Fountain Head* of that Knowledge which watered and enriched the World; they only pretend to be the *Channels* through which it was conveyed.

There are few or no other public Actions, but what a witty Malice may put some sinister Interpretation upon; and the best Deeds in Appearance *may*, and often, no Question, *do*, proceed from a Principle of Vanity: But the Actions of the Apostles will stand the Test of the severest Scrutiny. For since they could not act upon any indirect and interested Views of worldly Honour, Ambition, or Gain; the Wit of Man can assign no other Motive for what they did, than a determined Resolution of Mind, to bear the utmost Pressures of Misery and Torment, in the Cause of Truth, founded upon a Prospect of future Happiness. So far are they from consulting the Dignity of human Nature who deny the Truth of Christianity, that they do, what in them lyes, to rob us of the most incontestable Examples of human Virtue,

and, consequently, to depreciate our Nature.

It is objected indeed, whereas the primitive Witnesses sealed their Testimony with their Blood ; that Consideration does not weigh much, since several Criminals have persisted to the last in the Denial of known Facts.

To this I answer, that these Wretches generally do it with Hopes of moving the Compassion of the Government, with the Prospect of a Pardon or a Reprieve. But pray, which of these hardened Creatures would persevere to attest what he knew to be false ; provided a Pardon was offered, if he would confess the Truth ? Yet this was the Case of the Apostles : They might at any Time have preserved their Lives, by laying open the Cheat : Nay, in the first Council, that of the *Jews*, before which they were convened, all that was desired of them was, that they should preach no more in the Name of *Jesus*.

He that can produce one Instance of a *Man* that would rather part with his Life, than quit what he knew to be false, when he might save his Life by retracting ; must find

find some History as yet unknown to the learned World. Much less can a *Number* of such Men be produced, who all, with an inflexible Stubbornness, with an *unconquerable* Spirit, were consistent from first to last, till Death closed the Scene, without one of them throwing off the Mask. I have often heard that Terrors and Torments have made a Man *abjure* what he knew to be *true*; but I never heard, that they had something so inviting in them, as to make a Man, much less a Number of Men, maintain what they were conscious was a *Falshood*, a Falshood *unprofitable* to them, when they might have been rescued from Death by recanting. There is then this material Difference: Criminals either, in the first Place, falsify with an Intention to save themselves from the Stroke of Justice; whereas the Apostles brought their Lives, knowingly and wilfully, into imminent Danger; nay, actually lost them, for nothing but persevering to attest the Truth, unawed by any Terrors, unallured by Hopes of Pardon: Or secondly, Malefactors have died, as they lived, under an Insensibility of each good and virtuous Impression. Gross and heavy Minds, that

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think of nothing in this World but what strikes their Senses, may think of nothing *beyond* this World: But the Apostles must have lived an exemplary Life; and in an uninterrupted Tenour of Virtue. For a profligate and immoral Life would have blasted their Credit as much, as the Detection of a notorious Falshood. And it is not to be supposed, that Men of exemplary Lives would die with a Falshood in their Mouths.

I own that Enthusiasm will put Men upon desperate Attempts. But then the Apostles could *not* have been *Enthusiasts*. For they must have had absolute Certainty, whether our Saviour was risen, after such oft repeated, lasting, sensible Evidence of his being alive, after having seen, handled, and felt him: They must be intimately conscious (the highest Degree of Certainty) whether they could speak all Languages, agreeable to his Promise after his rising from the Dead, *viz.* that they should be *endued with Power from on High*. If they then asserted these Things without any Foundation, they *knew* what they asserted to be false. Now he is *not* an *Enthusiast*, who asserts what he *knows* to be false; he is something *worse*.

That

That Charge being dismissed, the only ^{SERMON}
tolerable Motive that can be assigned, is ^{I.}
that of Vain-Glory, which I have already
disproved. For it is plain to the Force of
a Demonstration, that they were not in-
fluenced by other worldly Views ; when
they knew, that renouncing Ease and Plea-
sure, their Country and Friends, they were
to face Poverty, Bonds, and Death, under
their most forbidding and frightful Appear-
ances.

Hear what *Clemens Romanus*, contem-
porary with the Apostles, says, in his first
Epistle to the *Corinthians*, the most va-
luable Monument of Christian Antiquity,
next to the inspired Writings, “ It was of
“ unjust Envy, that *Peter* suffered, not
“ one or two, but several Pains ; and hav-
“ ing undergone Martyrdom, is gone into
“ the Place of Glory, which was due to
“ him. It is out of Envy (continues the
“ same Author) that *Paul* got the Price
“ of Patience, having been put seven
“ Times in Irons, stoned, and scourged ;
“ being the Herald of the Gospel in the
“ *East* and *West*, he made his Faith fa-
“ mous. Having taught the *whole World*
“ Justice,

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Justice, and being come to the *Extremity of the West*, when he had suffered Martyrdom before the Chief of the State, he went out of the World * These are the Words of an Author, who had no Temptations to falsify, and living in the same Age with the Apostles, could not want Power to inform himself of the Truth of what he delivers. Since then the Apostles were not swayed by Vain-Glory, or other worldly Considerations; they must have been either acted by a disinterested Love of Pain and Misery, contrary to the known Workings of human Nature; contrary to the first Principle, that of Self-Preservation, and an invincible Desire of Happiness: Or they must have been swayed by a settled Conviction of the Truth of the Resurrection, and animated by the Hopes of an everlasting Weight of Glory. These are the only assignable Springs of Action.

Disbelievers would be thought to be great Patrons of social Morality: But one cannot well conceive how Society, and con-

* Cotelarii Patres Apostolici, Vol. I. Pag. 150. 151.

frequently

sequently social Morality, can subsist upon ^{SERMON} their Principles, which are fruitful of Dis-^{I.} trust and Jealousy. They who can impiously believe the *Apostles* to have been Deceivers and Knaves, must, if consistent with themselves, believe every one else to be so too, as far as he has Capacity and Opportunity. They who can entertain a Doubt of the *Apostles* Honesty, after the *strongest* Proofs of their Integrity that *they* could possibly give, or *Mankind* require, must entertain a *general undistinguished* Suspicion of every Person about them.

Add to this, that a Vein of Simplicity runs throughout their whole Composure, and Nature, void of Art, speaks in every Line. And whatever critical Skill and Accuracy in *Languages* they might want; they every where seem to speak, what is more estimable than all Languages besides, the Language of the *Heart*: They never cast in Shades, what might appear too bold, glaring, and incredible at the first transient View: They never smooth the Way and prepare the Reader, for what might seem offensive: They every where
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leave the *Actions* to *Speak*, and their *Readers* to *judge*, for *themselves*. Plain honest *Truth* wants no *artificial Colourings*; and *Falshood* is apt to *betray* itself, by laying them on too thick. *Truth* shines with *unborrowed Beauties*, and has no *Need* of foreign *Ornaments*: But on *Falshood*, which has no *Comeliness* in itself, Men bestow the more abundant *Comeliness*. Here they lavish out all their Art, prodigal of *Decorations*, to divert the Eye from attending to its genuine *Deformity*.

The Evidence still rises higher, if we consider that the *Truth* of the miraculous *Facts* in *Scripture-History*, is proved by *Events* subsequent to them; which *Events*, viz. the *Propagation* and *Establishment* of *Christianity*, could never have taken Place, unless the miraculous *Facts* had been true: For it was as impossible, that the twelve *Apostles* should propagate *Christianity*, against the united *Forces* of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, *Magistrates* and *Philosophers*; as that twelve unarmed Men should defeat the whole *Roman Army*. The *Relation* therefore, which the *Scripture* gives us, of *Miracles*, must be true: Because, without a
Supposition

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Supposition of Miracles actually performed, ^{SERMON}
we cannot rationally account for that great ^{I.}
Turn in religious Affairs, which not very
long after followed, *viz.* the Subversion
of Pagan Idolatry in Part, and the Intro-
duction of the Worship of God in Spirit
and in Truth.

But this Argument for the Truth of
Christianity falls under my next Head,
and must be reserved for another Dis-
course.

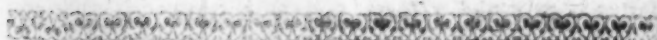
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SERMON II.

Preached at the

Lady MOYER'S LECTURE.

On the Evidences of Christianity.



JOHN III. 2.

He that is born of the Spirit, can know, that there is a Teacher
come from God: For no Man can do these
Miracles, that thou dost, except God be
with him.

I have already proved in a former Dis-
course, that Miracles may be so cir-
cumstanced, as to be direct and decisive
evidences of a divine Power and Commis-
sion.—That it was absolutely impossible
the Apostles should be deceived themselves,
the Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles and
their own.—That it was equally impos-
sible

SERMON II.

Preached at the

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On the Evidences of Christianity.



JOHN III. 2.

*Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher
come from God: For no Man can do these
Miracles, that thou doest, except God be
with him.*

I Have already proved in a former Dis-^{SERMON}
course, that Miracles may be so cir-^{II.}
cumstanced, as to be direct and decisive
Evidences of a divine Power and Commis-
sion — That it was *absolutely* impossible
the Apostles should be deceived themselves,
as Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles and
their own. — That it was *morally* impos-
sible

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II

— fible they should attempt to deceive others.
— The Subject of my present Discourse will be to prove, that the Apostles could not have deceived Mankind, if they would; nor have imposed a false Religion upon the World, by Virtue of a pretended Commission from Heaven.

If the Christian Religion, containing Doctrines *unpalatable* to Flesh and Blood, void of *every Advantage*, besides its own internal Excellency, to recommend it, and clogged with a great many *Incumbrances*, could carry Conviction with it *from East to West*, by such *incompetent Instruments*, in so short a Time, in Spite of the *most resolved Opposition*: If this Plant, from a slender Appearance at first, grew, and waxed a great Tree, when no kindly *Sunshine* of worldly Power yet smiled upon it; nay, when the *Inclemency* of the Season beat hard against it; the Growth of it was undoubtedly marvellous.

It is granted, that in Matters of pure *Speculation*, the Bulk of Mankind may be, and often are, deceived; because they have not Leisure or Capacity, to unravel studied Sophistry, and nicely to distinguish between what is plausible, and what is solid and substantial:

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substantial: But the Case is different as to ^{SERMON} Miracles, which are *Matters of Fact*, that ^{II.} fall under the Cognisance of our *Senses*. Here the Vulgar and the Learned are equally competent Judges, and you can persuade neither of them to believe he sees a glaring Fact, which he does not actually behold. Either then the Apostles wrought such Matters of Fact; or they did not. If they did, then they were invested with a Power from God: For evil Spirits would not, if they could, empower them to beat down Idolatry: If they did not, then it is unaccountable, how a Set of Fishermen, despised for their Poverty, and odious upon the Account of their Nation, should propagate through many Nations, not to say the whole known World, such an unlikely Story as this, viz. That one, who was crucified as a common Malefactor in *Ju-dæa*, was to be adored as a God; and that too at such a Juncture of Time, when their numerous Converts in several Parts of the World, some of whom were Men of known Distinction and Opulency, (such as *Dionysius of the Arcopagus*, *Joseph of the Jewish Sanhedrim*, *Sergius Paulus a Pro-consul*, *Flavius Clemens a Roman Consul*,
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&c.) who had, very probably, enjoyed one continued Sunshine of Prosperity; must bid adieu to all the Blandishments of Life; undergo whatever is distasteful to human Nature, and either suffer, or be in Danger of suffering, Martyrdom.

I would gladly have the Deists to try the Experiment: Let them send the ablest they can single out of their numerous Fraternity to broach such a like Story: For Instance, that one, who suffered in *England* for a Malefactor, is risen from the Dead, and is to be worshipped as the Saviour of Mankind: Let them send them to *Portugal* or *Spain*, where the Inquisition reigns, and where as exquisite Tortures will be applied to them, as were to the primitive Martyrs. It is easy to see the Consequence: They themselves would meet with a very warm Reception; but their Doctrine with a very cold one: Both would be involved in the same Doom, both perish and come to nought. If then the Apostles had not a Power of working genuine Miracles, and displaying the amplest Credentials of divine Power; it will be the greatest Miracle of all, that without either Riches to bribe, Authority to awe, or acquired Knowledge

and Dexterity, to over-reach Men into a SERMON II.
Compliance with their Notions, they should

pave the Way to so general and great a Turn in religious Affairs; when these boasted Masters of Reason, the Deists, these Men of large Views, who by an uncommon Superiority of Soul, have disengaged themselves from the Prejudices of Education, would not be able to bring over a Majority of Men, nay, perhaps, not one Man of common Sense in any one Nation; if they should set on Foot such another unpromising Project.

Let us suppose, that a Person in our Days should embark in a Design of cancelling all the old Religions, and building a new one upon their Ruins; that, to compass this Design, he pretended to raise the Dead, make the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Deaf hear, &c. that not long after his Death, his Followers publish a punctual circumstantial Relation of all these Things, mentioning the *Places where*, the *Persons upon whom*, the *Witnesses before whom*, these Miracles were said to be wrought:

Let us put the Case, that they too pretended to have the same miraculous Powers vested in them, and that their Doctrine gained

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Footing every where, not only in *England*, but in foreign Countries: Would the Magistracy, and those whose Interest was at Stake, remain unactive in such a critical Juncture, and suffer the People to be seduced by such over-bearing Pretensions? No, certainly: They would send, which might be easily done, to the *Places where*, the *Persons upon whom*, and the *Witnesses before whom*, these astonishing Notices of divine Power were said to be displayed: They would take down the Depositions of creditable and substantial Witnesses in every *Place*, that the Dead were *not* raised, nor the Sick cured *there*, nor thousands led in a miraculous Manner, &c. They would circulate and disperse these Attestations, and send the Antidote, wherever the Infection was spread.

Now I ask, Did the *Jewish* and *Pagan* Magistracy and Priesthood, upon the first Publication of the Facts, when the Gospel began to spread, take these *easy* Measures, which *Common Sense* suggested, to suppress Christianity, and confront it's Evidence? If they did, then Christianity must have been stifled and overlaid in it's Infancy, by the Weight of several Thousands of disinterested

interested Witnesses, giving it under their Hands, that no such glaring Actions were publickly done. This, I say, must have been the Consequence, if the Facts had been false; especially when all the Engines of worldly Power were applied against it. If they did *not* take this easy Method; they *virtually* and *implicitly* owned the Truth of the Facts: They confessed the World was *not* deceived; because, if it had been so, they neither wanted Power nor Inclination to *undeceive* it.

But it is objected, that such Accounts were published, which the Christians, when they got the Power into their Hands, wisely took Care to suppress. To which I answer; When did the Christians get the Power into their Hands? Why after Christianity had stood the shock, and outlived the Rage, of ten long Persecutions. But this does not at all invalidate what I said, *viz.* that Christianity must have been overlaid in it's *Infancy*, by the Weight of authentic Accounts, well-attested against it's Truth: Whereas then it was too late; it had taken the deeper Root, by weathering out the Storm. Besides, this is *gratis dictum*; there are no Traces left of any Books,

belonging

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that ever denied the Facts; no Mention of them occurs any where. We have indeed some Remains of *Celsus*, *Hierocles*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian*, declared Enemies to Christianity. But what they alledge does not amount to a Denial of the Facts: So far are they from that, that they ascribe the Miracles of our Saviour to Magic, and the *Jews* in the *Talmud*, just as their Forefathers do in the New Testament, to a Correspondence or Intercourse with the Devil.

To account for the Rise and Propagation of Christianity, our Adversaries have Recourse to *false* Miracles, which they say are very common among Christians. By Christians here they mean the *Papists*: But if Popish Priests chuse to act their pretended Miracles in *By-Places*, in Cloysters, or at least only before Men of their own *Persuasion*, where they have the *Power* in their Hands, to *fence* off an impartial *Enquiry* into them; and yet their pious Frauds have been generally detected: If, notwithstanding their confessed *Depth* of *Art* and *Finesse*, to execute a well-concerted Project, they have never attempted to do a Wonder in the Eye of a *Protestant Nation*, before
a great

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a great Concourse of *Hereticks*, as they call us; then I desire to know, how a Set of *unpolished Men*, *unpractised* in *studied Wiles* and *mysterious Frauds*, should audaciously and successfully carry on a flagrant Cheat, in the Eye of Thousands of it's most inveterate Foes, the Priests and Rulers of the *Jewish Nation*, and indeed the Rulers and Priests of every other Nation, who wanted neither *Malice* nor *Discernment* enough to *unmask* and expose it, if it had been such, nor *Power* to *crush* and stifle it. This, I say, was impossible, if their Miracles had been *Impostures*, and therefore they were not so. And since the Discovery of *Impostures* has *staggered* the Faith of some *weak Men*, and made them look upon Christianity in the same disadvantageous Light; I will venture to say, that the more *numerous* the *Impostures* are, which are *discovered*; the more *Christianity* is *confirmed* thereby: Because it proves, that *no Imposture* can stand the Test of a *severe Examination*, when Men of *Power* and *Policy* vigorously *interest* themselves in the *Detection* of it, and are resolved to go to the *Bottom* of it. *Impostures* need only to be *held up to the Light*, to be seen
S 4 through:

through: But Christianity, the more
thoroughly it was canvassed, and the more
vigorously it was opposed, the more it gained
Footing in the World. There is then this
Difference between an *Impossibility* and a
genuine Miracle. The former loves *Obscu-
rity*; the latter is desirous to be set in the
strongest Point of View, and challenges the
nearest Inspection of the most penetrating
Judge.

Besides, *Tacitus*, an *Heathen Historian*,
assures us, that in *Nero's Reign*, but thirty
Years after our Saviour's Resurrection, there
was (*ingens Multitudo*) a prodigious Multi-
tude of Christians at *Rome*, above five
thousand Miles from *Jerusalem*, that *Nero*
inflicted upon them the most exquisite Pu-
nishments, and particularly, that they were
burnt to give Light in the Streets, when
Day-light failed.

What shall we say, as to that prodigious
Multitude, who, in *Nero's Reign*, were
faithful unto Death, unwearied by *Toils*,
unshaken by *Misery*, and undismayed by
Terrors, even by Death the King of *Ter-
rors*? They could not be mistaken, since
they who conversed with the *Apostles*,
must know, whether they made good their

Pretensions

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Pretensions to a miraculous Power, or not; SERMON II.
or, in other Words, whether they were

Impostors, or Persons commissioned by
God. Did they then wilfully conspire to

impose upon others? Upon what Motives?

That of Vain-Glory? No, certainly. The

great Leaders of Parties may sometimes
expect to be transmitted down to Posterity,

with Marks of Honour, and to leave be-

hind them a bright and lasting Track of

Glory. But their numerous Retinue of

Follower must expect to die unnoticed, as

they lived unknown: Each of Them will

be lost in the Crowd, like so many Cyphers,

undistinguished, and of no Consideration or

Moment, any farther than they contribute

to make the principal Figure, which was

placed at the Head of them, more consi-

derable. Now that Men should give up

the most weighty and valuable Considera-

tions of this Life, nay Life itself, for in-

valuable Rewards in Heaven, and for an

exceeding Weight of Glory; that they should

suspend all Desire of Applause, till they re-

ceived the inestimable Applause of their

Creator.——This is easily accounted for.

But that Men should give up their All here,

for Nothing in Reversion; that they should

resign

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resign *Life* itself, without even expecting that *imaginary Life*, a great Name after Death, merely to attest and support an *unprofitable Falshood*.—This is highly incredible, absurd, and impossible.

I grant, that several may dye Martyrs for an *Opinion*, that is false; because *though* it be false, they may be *persuaded* it is *true*. But Miracles, upon which Christianity is founded, are Matters of *Fact*, of which the early Followers of the Apostles must have been Eye-Witnesses. And no Body ever died to assert an Untruth in Matters of *Fact*, as to which he could *not* be *deceived*, supposing the *Truth* of his *Senses*: Though several have died, rather than renounce *Opinions*, the Falsity of which they had not Judgment enough to discover. Much less can it be imagined, that, under the early Persecutions of *Nero* and *Domitian*, many *Thousands* of Christians would go on in an *uninterrupted Track* of *Falsifying* wilfully, at the Expence of their Lives; without *one* of them, even in the Article of *Death*, deviating into *Truth*. 33v bns)

Pliny, a Person of unsuspected Veracity, in the Reign of *Trajan*, not seventy Years after the Resurrection, in a Letter to the Emperor,

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Emperor, informs him that, where he was SERMON II.
Governor in *Bithynia*, a Place above twelve hundred Miles from *Jerusalem* the nearest Way; to arrive at which you must travel through several Nations, of different Languages, *Syrians, Pamphylians, Carians, Lycians, &c.* Christianity had so far prevailed, that the Temples of the Gods were almost desolated, their sacred Rites a long Time intermitted, and there were very few that would buy any Sacrifices; notwithstanding great Severities were inflicted upon Christians of every Rank, Sex, and Age.

Justin Martyr, who lived in the same Century, informs us, in his Dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew, that there was no Nation in the known World, where some did not pray to God in the Name of *Jesus Christ*. What shall we say then? that the Apostles travelled from one End of the Earth to the other, without understanding the Languages of several Nations? Then it would have been impossible to have made any Converts, by speaking to them in an *unknown* Tongue (and yet we are assured from authentic Writers of another Persuasion, that they did make many Profelytes). Or shall we say, that Men bred up in low Employments had

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SERMON had a vast *Variety* of Languages at Com-
II mand? That would have been almost im-
possible, if they had made it the *whole*
Business of their *Lives*. In short there is
no other Way of accounting for it, but by
Inspiration: They could not *acquire* them;
they must be the *Gift of God*. And when
I consider, that they enlightened as many
Nations with a rational Devotion, and sound
Morality, as *Alexander* ravaged by the
Force of Arms; that they did more in *one*
Century to disabuse the World, and rescue
it from human Sacrifices, and to propagate
beneficial Truth; than the *Philosophers*
had done for *many Ages*: I think, what
was a mere Compliment, when applied to
a certain great Hero, is but strict Justice
done to them, *viz.* that they were the In-
struments in *tantis Rebus gerendis, quantus*
audere vix hominis; perficere nullius nisi
Dei, “in bringing those Things to bear,
“which merely to attempt was more than
“human; but to perform was certainly
“God-like and divine.” That the Apostles,
though *low*, should overcome the *Great*;
and though *ignorant*, should teach the
Wise; can only be ascribed to him who
has chosen the *weak Things of this World*
to confound the *Mighty*. Besides,

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Besides, supposing the Apostles had as-
serted *without* any *Foundation*, that at the
Death of our Saviour, when the Moon
was at the Full, and consequently, there
could be no *natural* Eclipse, yet there was
a *supernatural* one, and a Darkness of three
Hours continuance, that in the *Metropolis*
of the Nation, the Partition of the Temple
was rent from the Top to the Bottom; that
the Graves were opened, and the Dead
appeared in the Heart of the Nation; that
fifty Days after, at the Solemnity of *Pentecost*,
to celebrate which, People resorted
from different Parts of the World, there
was a Descent of fiery Tongues upon them,
by Virtue of which several who, it could
be proved, knew no Tongue but their na-
tive one, were empowered to converse pub-
lickly with Men of different Nations, in
their own Language: Suppose, I say, they
should have asserted these Things without
any *Foundation*; could they have persuad-
ed one Man to have swallowed such crude
glaring Falshoods in Matters of Fact, and
make him believe he saw what he never
did, a supernatural Eclipse, and heard what
he did not, the Miracle of Tongues? If
they could, I should not know which most

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II.

to wonder at, their *Modesty* in *asserting* such notorious Untruths, or his *Understanding* in *believing* them. Thus their Story would have been an empty Bubble, which must have sunk and vanished, almost as soon as it rose. That single Fact of the miraculous Eclipse, if false, must have proved a *Milstone* about the Neck of it, and sunk it irretrievably. It put it in the Power of Man, Woman, and Child, to disprove their Relation: Every one would tell them, such a Thing must be notorious and visible to the whole World; which yet had escaped *their* Notice, and that of every one else they knew. They *could not* then have imposed upon the Age in which they lived.

The only Thing, that can be supposed is, that the Story might be put upon *after* Ages, at some *distant* Period of Time.

Place then the Date and Rise of Christianity, at *what* Period of Time you please; could the Propagators of it persuade any People, to believe such a Story of *public* notorious Facts, which they never *heard* of before, without *Foundation* or Evidence? No, certainly, if they should tell us, that, to perpetuate the Memory of these Actions, their

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their History had been written by *Eye-Witnesses*, public *Sacraments* appointed, *weekly and annual Festivals* celebrated from *that Time to this*, and a *Church* founded, against which *the Gates of Hell* never could prevail. For then the Story would carry it's own *Confutation* along with it, and they might have as well attempted to make People *believe* they heard ignorant Men *speak* all Manner of *Languages*, or *saw* our Saviour *raise* the *Dead*; as that there was then in *Being* a Church, against which the *Gates of Hell* never had prevailed; in which these *Festivals* had been always observed, and these *Sacraments* always kept up. The Cry would have been; what is become of your Church, which was to be impregnable as a Rock, and lasting as the Sun? Is it become an *invisible* Church indeed? Out of your own Mouths will we condemn you: What need we farther *Witnesses*? Now would any Nation, discarding the Religion which they had been bred up in, admit a NEW one in it's Stead, upon the Account of such a groundless *self-contradicting* Story? What, would they say, could such glaring and notorious Facts, which must have alarmed the whole World, like

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like the Sailing of a Ship, leave no Traces behind them of their Existence in History?

In short such an *unsupported* and *overgrown Falshood* must have fallen to the Ground by it's own *unweildy Bulk*, without any one to overturn it.

To apply this to *Christianity in general*. If the marvellous Facts were not true, the Books, which contain them, could never have been received; nor the Festivals and Observances, which commemorate them, have taken Place in *that Age*, in which they were said to be done: Because it was *then* in every Body's Power to *disprove* them. They could not, in any *after Ages*, have been imposed upon Mankind: Because, though Absurdities may be grafted upon an *old Religion*, yet no Nation ever did, or will, voluntarily embrace a Religion entirely *new*, without any Evidence. And it is certain, they *were* not thus imposed upon Mankind *long after*; because it appears by *uncontradicted written Tradition*, that these Actions, august Ceremonies, and Festivals, did commence at the *Period assigned*; and have flowed down from their first *Fountain Head* to the present Age, in one *uninterrupted Stream*.

To

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To apply this to the Truth of the Re-^{SERMON}
surrection in particular. The *Apostolical* ^{II.}
Age could not be deceived by a sham Story
of a Resurrection, because our Saviour's
Resurrection was as public and notorious,
as his *Death* and *Crucifixion*, though not in
itself, yet in its *immediate Consequences*, I
mean those *Miracles* wrought before Thou-
sands, by Eye-Witnesses, to *confirm* the
Truth of it. Was it then set on Foot in
some *after Age*? No; because both the
weekly and *yearly* Memorials of it are of as
old a Date as *Christianity* itself, and, from
the first Propagation of it, have been suc-
cessively handed down to us. That *Sunday*
was the *weekly* Memorial of it, even in the
Apostolical Age, is plain from St. *John*,
who says, that *he was in the Spirit on the*
Lord's Day, or the Day then set apart to
commemorate the Lord's Resurrection. And
that there was an *annual* Memorial of it,
instituted by the Apostles, and continued
down to us, is plain from the early Dis-
putes about the *precise* Time, on which it
was to be observed; though the Observa-
tion of *Easter*, as an Apostolical Institu-
tion, was never controverted. In short,
the History of the Gospel has *all* the Testi-
mony,

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mony, that any Matter of Fact ever had; and it has, besides, several material Evidences, which other ancient Matters of Fact have not. For are there any other ancient Matters of Fact, which were attested, by Eye-Witnesses, who expected nothing in this Life but *Miseries* and *Hardships* for their Attestations; who were ready to lay down their Lives for the Truth of what they said; who could not be deceived themselves, had no Interest to deceive others, nor could have deceived them if they would? Are there *standing Monuments* and *sensible Observances*, appointed to keep up the Memory of other ancient Matters of Fact, commencing from the *Time* in which the *Actions* were done, and from thence, as from the *first Link*, descending to Posterity in one *continued Chain*? Did any Religion besides *conquer* by *suffering*, and triumph by having it's *Thousands*, and *ten Thousands*, slain? Or did any besides, though it's Instruments were vastly unequal to the Task, bear down *all Opposition*, and triumph over the *Rage* of the *Jews*, the *Learning* of the *Philosophers*, the *Power* of *Emperors*, and the *Prejudices* and *Passions* of *all Mankind*?

If

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If Christianity was an Imposture, it was SERMON II.
an Imposture *suu Generis*, a pure Original,
imitating no Imposture that ever was heard
of before, and which *no* Imposture, I dare
say, will ever after venture to imitate:
An Imposture, in which there could be no
Priestcraft. For the Priests, by professing
and propagating it, only exposed themselves
to superior Tortures: They stood in the
Front of the Battle, and were sure to fall
the first, and the Bishop generally ended in
the Martyr. An Imposture in which there
could be no State-craft: For all the States
of the World for three hundred Years were
combined against it.

So strong, in short, if we take the Ar-
guments from Prophecy, the internal Ex-
cellency of Christianity, and the Necessity
of a Revelation into the Account, is the
Evidence for Christianity; that it is the
last Thing I should believe, that an *inquisi-*
tive unprejudiced Man, of a sound Head,
and an upright Heart, could be a *deter-*
mined Infidel. Nothing ought to be ad-
mitted in Bar to such pregnant Proofs, but
some *absolute Impossibility* in the Nature of
the Thing: Mere *Difficulties* weigh No-
thing: For at that Rate we must disbelieve

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SERMON II. *every Thing in Nature; every Thing in Nature being attended with great, nay insuperable Difficulties.*

Could we suppose a Being in some other Part of the wide Creation, of the same Size of Understanding that we are, but an intire Stranger to the natural History of the World; should any one inform him of the amazing Properties of the Loadstone, the *Phænomena* of Light and Colours, the Circulation of the Blood contrary to all the known Laws of Motion, the Revolutions of the Planets, the *Cohæſion* of Matter, the *infinite* Divisibility of *finite* Matter, nay, of the *least* Grain of that finite Matter, the surprising Effects of Chemistry; he would think the *History* of *Nature* far more unaccountable, than any Deist can the Book of *Grace*, and the *History* of the *Bible*.

Poor short-sighted Creatures! the *least* Grain of Sand is able to baffle the *finest* Understanding: And yet we would pretend to sound the *Depths* of the *divine* Nature and Counsels; never considering, that if what was revealed concerning *God*, were always adapted to our *Comprehension*, how could it with any Fitness represent *that* Nature,

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Nature, which we allow to be *incompre-* SERMON
hensible? We need not ransack the *Scrip-* III
tures for Difficulties: Every Thing about
us and *within* us, *above* us and *beneath* us,
convinces us, that we are very ignorant;
and, if once we come to a Resolution to
quit what is *clear* (such are the Proofs for
Christianity) upon the Account of what is
obscure; we shall run into universal Scep-
ticism.

Though Men may disagree about Mat-
ters of pure *abstract Reasoning*; yet every
reasonable Man is determined by the *Evi-*
dences for Matters of *Fact*, when they
amount to a *moral Certainty*; unless it be
in Cases, where the *Passions* interest them-
selves, and indispose the Mind for the Re-
ception of Truth. Every *intelligent Per-*
son, after Examination, must *judge alike*
in *these* Matters; except his Judgment be
overruled, and his Assent *obstructed* by some
wrong Affection, by some strong *Bias*,
and some insuperable *Prejudice*, perhaps
unsuspected by himself: Otherwise a Man
might seriously dispute, whether *Julius*
Cæsar made a Descent upon *England*, con-
quered *Pompey*, and was stabbed in the
Senate House; which *no Man* in *his Senses*

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ever did, or ever will do. Either then it must be maintained, contrary to what I have already proved, that the Evidences of Christianity do not amount to a moral Certainty, — or, if they do, it will be difficult to assign a Reason, why clear, strong, and indubitable Proofs, should not have as much Force and Weight in the Affairs of Religion, as they have in all others; — unless we may suppose there is something *within*, some latent *Disingenuity* of Temper, which *here*, though not in other Cases, shuts up all the Avenues, by which Light can find an Entrance.

Though we have not a *scientific* infallible Certainty of the Truth of Christianity; yet we have an *infallible* Certainty, that we ought to be determined by such Evidences, as Christianity is surrounded with: Because either we must act upon such Evidence in the daily Course of Life, or remain in a State of utter Inaction. He, that will not admit moral Certainty to be a sufficient Principle of Action, if his Practice be conformable to his Persuasion, must neither eat nor drink, till he has a *mathematical* Demonstration, that what he eats and drinks will prove *wholesome*; he will be
sure

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sure of *nothing* in this World, but that he must, by acting up to such a Notion, depart speedily out of it. If we have a *moral* Certainty of the Truth of Christianity; if every *unprejudiced* Mind is determined by *moral* Certainty, we may argue thus.—It is demonstrably certain, that there is a Being of Infinite Goodness, Truth, and Veracity.——It is demonstrably certain, that a Being of infinite Goodness, Truth, and Veracity will not mislead his Creatures into unavoidable Errors, nor suffer an Imposture to pass upon the World, in his Name, in a Matter of the last Importance, with such manifest Tokens of Credibility, and moral Certainty, as must, and do in every other Case, determine an *unprejudiced* Mind — therefore it is demonstrably certain, that Christianity is no Imposture. Thus the Christian Faith, in the last Resort, resolves itself into, and terminates in, the divine Veracity : It is as sure as that God cannot lie, that he who has laid his Creatures under an *Obligation* to act upon *moral* Evidence, would not have done so, if such strong Evidence could ever inevitably deceive them in an *Affair* of *infinite* Concernment.

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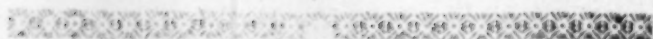
II

SERMON III.

Preached at the

Lady MOYER'S LECTURE.

On the Genuineness and Inspiration
of the Sacred Writings.



I Thess. II. 13.

When ye received the Word of God, which
ye heard of us, ye received it not as the
Word of Men, but as it is in Truth,
the Word of God.

WHEN St. Paul preached the
Gospel of Christ to the Thessa-
lonians, they embraced it
gladly, and believed it as it really
was, of divine Authority and Inspiration.
That we may do so, let us be ne-
cessary to prove,
1st, The

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*When ye received the Word of God, which
ye heard of us; ye received it not as the
Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth)
the Word of God.*

WHEN St. Paul preached the SERMON
Gospel of Christ to the *Thes-* III.
salonians, they embraced it
gladly, and believed it to be, what it really
was, of divine Authority and Inspiration.

That we may do so too, it will be ne-
cessary to prove,

If, The

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Ist, The Genuineness of those Books,
which contain the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
And,

IIly, Their divine Inspiration.

Ist, I am to prove the Genuineness of
those Books, which contain the Gospel of
Jesus Christ.

Those Books are confessedly genuine,
which have received the Sanction of their
Cotemporaries, or immediate Successors,
followed by an uninterrupted Series of
Vouchers.

Thus St. Paul quotes the Gospel of St.
Luke, whose Praise was in the Gospel
throughout all the Churches, as of equal
Authority with the Writings of Moses.
For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle
the Ox, that treadeth out the Corn; and,
the Labourer is worthy of his Reward.

1 Tim. v. 18. which last Passage occurs
no where but in St. Luke x. ver. 7, as the
former is to be met with Deut. xxv. ver. 4.

Thus St. John, as Eusebius † informs
us, stamped his Authority, at the Instance

† Eusebii Hist. Eccl. Lib. 3. cap. 24.

of his Friends, upon the Gospels of *Mat-*
thew, *Mark*, and *Luke*, and then added
his own as a Supplement to them.

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Much the same Account we have from
the ancient Author of the Martyrdom of
Timothy, with this additional Circumstance,
that before *St. John* reviewed them, they
had already been translated into several Lan-
guages †. Nor is it at all unlikely, that
the same Zeal which prompted *St. John* to
expose one Fraud, as we shall prove by and
by, would likewise determine him to au-
thorize the genuine Records of Christiani-
ty. This is what the World might expect
from a Person so venerable, for his Wisdom
and Authority, as well as for his great Age;
And this is, what common Sense would
suggest to one, who lived after Forgeries
had begun to creep abroad.

Though *Clemens Romanus*, *Barnabas*,
Hermas, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, Writers who
had been conversant with the Apostles, sel-
dom ascribe any of the Books of the New
Testament to their respective Authors; yet
they virtually own them all to be genuine,
by shewing the most distinguished Regard

† Photii Bibliotheca Cod. 254.

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SERMON to them, by often quoting them, and oft-
 III. ner alluding to them: An Honour they do
 no other Writings, except those of the Old
 Testament. They transcribe numerous Pre-
 cepts from the Scriptures, of which their
 own Lives were indeed the most beautiful
 Transcript. That they have not expressly
 named the Authors, from whom they bor-
 row, is easily accounted for: They wrote
 chiefly, if not intirely, for the Benefit of
 their Cotemporaries, and it was needless
 to point out to those, who lived so near
 the Fountain Head, from what Source they
 drew that living Water, which they had
 so thoroughly imbibed, and so plentifully
 transfused into their own Compositions.

What a religious Veneration these early
 Writers paid to the Scriptures, the follow-
 ing Passage of *Ignatius* * will clearly shew.
 “ Your Prayer to God, *says he*, shall make
 “ me perfect, that I may attain to that
 “ Portion, which his Mercy has assigned
 “ me; having Recourse to the Gospel, as
 “ to the Flesh of Jesus Christ; and to the
 “ Apostles, as to the Presbytery of the

* *Ignatii Epist. ad Philadelph. Sect. 5. Cotelierii Patres
 Apostol. Tom. 2. Vide Notas Johannis Clerici in locum.*

“ Church. Let us also love the Prophets, because even they preached the Gospel, believed in Christ, and hoped for him †.”

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The Meaning of these remarkable Words is plainly this. That he as firmly believed the Gospel, as if he had heard Jesus Christ himself alive, and in the Flesh, delivering

† Quod a Nemine, quod quidem sciam, huc usque observatum fuit, monuit nos olim clarissimus *Gravius*, *Ignatium* utriusque hujus Canonis mentionem fecisse, in Epistola ad *Philadelphicos*. Προφῆταις τῷ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΩ ὡς Ἰησοῦ, καὶ τῷ ΑἰΓΕΤΟΛΟΓΙΩ ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν Ἑκκλησίας· καὶ τὰς ΠΡΟΦΗΤΑΣ διὰ τὴν ἀσπασίαν, &c. Nempe per Ἑυαγγέλιον, Codicem Evangelicum, per Ἀποστόλους, Codicem Epistolicum, per Προφῆτας, Canonem Vet. Testamenti Συνεδολογικῶς intelligendum existimat. Id quod nobis postea persuasissimum erat, etiam ex aliis Ignatii Locis. Nonnunquam enim Evangelii vocem strictius sumere videtur pro Codice Evangelico; (ut cum Evangelium ἐξαίρετος esse ait, ἢ ὃ τὸ πᾶν ἡμῶν διδάσκει, καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τελελεῖται. Epist. ad Smyrn. §. 7. & in Ep. ad *Philadelph.* Ἐξαίρετος ἔχει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, τὴν ἀνάστασιν, &c. §. 8.) tum vero alias laxiori significato Evangelium apud Eum pro Canone integro. N. T. acceptum videmus; ubi simul memorat Legem Moysi, Prophetas, & Evangelium; (ὅς ἐκ ἑκαστῶν αἱ προφητεῖαι, ἡ δὲ ὁ νόμος Μωσέως, ἀλλ' ὅτι μὲν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Ep. ad Smyrn. §. 5.) Quod si vero res ita se habebat, Canon Epistolicus mediocri Temporis intervallo præcesserit necesse est Epistolas Ignatianas; ideoque & prodierit sub annum forte æræ Vulgaris CX. sive etiam aliquanto ante. *Millii Prolegom.* Pag. 24.

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to him the Precepts therein recorded, that he betook himself to the Writings of the Apostles, with no less Assurance, than if that venerable Presbytery were then acting, immediately under the great Bishop and Shepherd of their Souls, Jesus Christ; that, after these, the next Regard was to be paid to the Writings of the Prophets, because they had foretold our Saviour's Advent, his Death, and Passion.

From hence we may gather, that the Canon of the New Testament was then settled, and put upon a Foot of Equality with the Old. When he says, *Let us love the Prophets*, who could be known to him no otherwise than by their Writings, he undoubtedly means their Compositions, and the Books of the Old Testament: And when he says, *he has Recourse to the Gospel, and the Apostles*, he no less plainly means the main Body of the New Testament, as divided into the four Gospels, and the Epistles of the Apostles.

In his Epistle to the Inhabitants of *Smyrna*, Section the 7th, he writes thus. "It becomes us to attend to the Prophets, but especially the Gospel, in which the Passion has been shewn to us, and the Resurrection perfected." And

And again, Section 5th, in the same SERMON III. Epistle, "whom neither the Prophecies, "nor the Law of *Moses*, nor even the "Gospel, to this very Day could per-
"suade."

From *Ignatius*, who, as *St. Chrysostom* says, conversed familiarly with the Apostles and was intimately acquainted with their Doctrine; let us pass on to *Polycarp*, who was not only instructed by the Apostles, but by them constituted Bishop of the Church of *Smyrna* †.

From him we learn, that in that early Age, the Books of the New Testament were generally studied, and dignified with the Name of holy Writings. "For, I "trust, *says he*, that ye are well versed in "the Holy Scriptures, and that Nothing "(of this Kind) has escaped you.—And "in these it is said, *Be ye angry, and sin "not. And, let not the Sun go down upon "your Wrath* *."

And in another very short Paragraph †, where he has quoted the Sacred Writings no less than four Times, he styles those

† *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 3.

* *Polycarpi Ep. ad Philippenses*. Sect. 12.

† *Ibidem*, Sect. 7th.

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Writings, which he quotes, "the Oracles of the Lord." The Church of *Smyrna*, over which he presided, in their Account of his Martyrdom, written immediately after his Death, appeals to the Scriptures, as of decisive Authority. "We do not commend, *say they*, those who offer themselves [to Martyrdom] since the Gospel teaches no such Thing †."

If, as it plainly appears from *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, the Writings of the New Testament were put upon a Level with those of the Old; then it will follow, that they were read at that Time in private Families and public Congregations; since the *Jewish* Scriptures confessedly had that distinguishing Mark of Respect paid to them: And it is plain, they received the same Scriptures which we do: Since their Quotations every where agree in *Sense* and *Substance* with the Books which we now receive, though they do not confine themselves always *precisely* to the same Words. For it was the Custom of that Age to quote *memoriter*.

That St. *Paul*'s Epistles were thus publickly read, we have earlier Evidence. He

† *Cotelarii Patres Apostol.* Page 196.

himself

himself orders one of them (if not two) <sup>SERMON
III.</sup> to be read in the Churches of the *Laodiceans* and *Colossians* *; and we may fairly gather from St. *Peter's* Words †, that the rest of his Epistles had the same just Honour done them.

Papias, who was Contemporary with these Writers, and conversant with the immediate Disciples of the Apostles, expressly ascribes ‡ the Gospels of St. *Matthew* and *Mark* to their respective Authors, and establishes the Genuineness of the first Epistle of *Peter*, and the first of *John*.

The Sum of the Evidence from the Apostolical Writers is this: That the Writings of the New Testament were then gathered into one Volume, publicly read in Churches, and universally received; since they are quoted by *Clemens* at *Rome*, by *Barnabas* at *Cyprus*, by *Ignatius* in *Syria*, by *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and by *Papias* at *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*.

When *Justin Martyr*, in the Year 140, in his second Apology mentions, (and men-

* Colossians iv. 16.

† 2 Peter iii. 16.

‡ Eusebii Eccles. Hist. Lib. 3. cap. 39.

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tions it, not as something new,) that every Sunday the *Prophetical Writings*, and the *Memoirs of the Apostles* were read publickly in the *Christian Congregations*; can it be doubted but he meant those very Writings of the Apostles, whom he so frequently cites in his own? Add to this, that the *Syriack Version*, which several learned Men have, I think, proved to be made in or near the Times of the Apostles, but is undoubtedly of great Antiquity, agrees exactly (some Differences not material excepted,) with our present Canon. If the present Scriptures then were Forgeries; either they were published in the *Apostolical Age*, or not. If they were, then the Apostles, who made it their Business to propagate sincere and unmixed Truth, would not see their pious Labours defeated, but would take Care to unmask the Imposture. Of this we have a pregnant Instance in St. *John*. No sooner were the Acts of *Paul* and *Thecla* forged, than he took Care to detect, convict, and degrade the Author of them, who was a Presbyter, and gave Notice of it to the *Asiatick Churches*; as we learn from *Tertullian* *.

* De Baptismo, Cap. 17.

But

But if they were published *after* the ^{SERMON} Apostolical Age; then it will be impossible ^{III.} to account how they came to be received every where, in so short a Time with an universal Agreement, in Countries some hundreds of Miles distant from one another, without any *Opposition*, by Persons who were rigidly *tenacious* of whatever was *Apostolical*, as appears by the early Controversy about *Easter*, by Persons who *sacrificed* their *Lives* for the Truths contained in those Books. *Tertullian* appealing to the Apostolical Churches, gives us to understand, that in his Time *, *ipsæ authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur*, “ the very “ authentic Letters of the Apostles were “ read there;” where, by *authentic*, he must mean *Autographa*, the Apostles *Hand Writing*; otherwise why should he *single* out and specify the Churches planted by the *Apostles*. The genuine Copies of their Writings in *Greek*, if that was all he meant, were certainly read in *other* Churches, *besides* those which were planted by the *Apostles*. He farther gives us to understand, that there had been very early Coun-

* *Tertull. de Præscript. Cap. 36.*

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cils before his Time, to settle the Canon of the Scripture, when he says, that *Hermas* had been rejected by every Council of his Adversaries, as *apocryphal* *.

Great Noise I know has been made about the many *spurious* Pieces: But the Question, in short, is this, 1st, Whether those *spurious* Pieces were generally received in those *early* Ages? If they can prove this, they will say something to the Purpose to invalidate the present Canon: If they cannot, then those Forgeries cannot be put upon an equal Foot with the present Scripture. For the Argument for the present Scripture is this, that it is incredible, such a Number of good and learned Men, without any interested Views, in the most distant Countries, should combine together in a Cheat, or be imposed upon by one. It is much easier to suppose a false Statute Book put upon a whole Nation, than a *spurious* Bible put upon the whole Christian World, howsoever dispersed, without a Discovery.

2^{dly}, Can any one Martyr be produced for the supposititious Pieces? No, on the

* *Tertullian*, de Pudicitia. Cap. 10.

contrary,

contrary, those who disagreed with the Apostolical Churches, and introduced wild and absurd Notions, held it unnecessary to suffer Martyrdom. *Justin Martyr* (Apol. 2d.) makes it the distinguishing Character of all the Hereticks in his Age, that they were so far from suffering, that they never were persecuted for their Religion. *Tertullian* (*Scorpiacōn*) calls them *Martyriorum Refractories*, Decliners of Martyrdom. They were too wise to part with their Lives for such chimerical and romantic Inventions. Whereas several thousands expired leisurely in studied Torments, attesting the Truth of the Gospels, when they might be easily satisfied of their Genuineness by the concurring Testimony of the Christian World, as well as by Tradition, from the Churches planted by the Apostles.

3dly, Whoever will give himself the Trouble to read over the Fragments of these Forgeries, preserved by the Ancients, and collected by the Moderns, may easily see they carry their own Confutation along with them; they carry evident Marks of Spuriousness. And when he compares them with the genuine Productions of the inspired Writers, he will find that Passage

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of Cicero applicable, *Opinionum commenta delet Dies, Naturæ judicia confirmat*. The former were like mishapen Monsters, which are very short lived; the latter, like the genuine Productions of Nature, that have strong *Stamina*, gradually increased in Strength. They weathered out the Storm, and outlived the Rage of ten Persecutions. It need not, I think, stagger the Faith of any, that the *Gnosticks*, who patronized abominable Impurities; that the *Manichæans* and *Encratites*, who held two independent Principles, and *Basilides* with his Followers, who maintained the Lawfulness of unnatural Lust, should reject the Scriptures, and forge new ones. They were against the Gospels for this very good Reason, because the Gospels were against them. They assigned no Reasons why they rejected some Parts of Scripture, and admitted others; but were acted by Caprice and arbitrary Humour, unless this may pass for a Reason, that they pretended to be wiser than the Apostles, and able to correct them. See *Irenæus*, Lib. 3.

Dismissing therefore these Hereticks, it will be material to observe, that the Scriptures visibly bear that Stamp of Antiquity, which

which they pretend to, that they are conformable to the Genius of that Age and Nation, in which they were said to be penned; that there are in them no Anachronisms, no Mistakes about the Tenets, religious Rites, and Variety of Sects among the *Jews*, at that particular Juncture; no Blunders about those several eminent Personages, which then acted in a public Capacity: Their Speech and Idiom never bewraying them, to be of a different Country, but every where adapted to that Dialect and Manner of Expression, which was peculiar to the *Jews*. If then the Scriptures were not of that Antiquity, which they lay Claim to; then it would have been morally impossible, for a Writer of a later Date, to hit *critically* the Air of *Antiquity*, to hit the *distinguishing* Marks, and *appropriate Characteristicks* of the Time and Nation, in which they were pretended to be composed, and to be consistent, and all of a Piece, from first to last, throughout several Performances of a considerable Length, without being ever off his Guard, without once dropping the Mask, without once giving Way to Phrases, that were in Vogue, when he himself lived, Phrases,

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that would be ever uppermost in his Mind, and pressing for a Vent; without any Allusions to Customs, that were not then in Being; without any Mistakes in Chronology, Geography, and the History of those Times.

It is thus, that all Forgeries have been laid open, and none of them have been able to stand the Test of Criticism; Something there was in their Style or Matter; Something in the *Nature* and *Texture* of the Books, that *betrayed* them. And it is easier for a Person of Learning, Sagacity, and Judgment, to discover the Age of an *Author*, than it is for a *Connoisseur* to discover that of a *Medal*, *Coin*, *Picture*, or *Statue*. It remains then, that the Scriptures were as ancient as they pretend to be.

And if so, then they must be true; otherwise they could not have been received: For as they contain a punctual circumstantial Relation of public Facts, with the *Time when*, the *Places where*, and the *Persons before whom* they were performed, they could not have put upon the World such a continued Series of marvellous unparalleled Actions, said to be done in the Eye of the World, when they must be fresh in their Memories, without being detected.

It is certain, that St. *Paul's* Epistles (all SERMON
III. except that to the *Hebrews*) ever were looked upon as genuine, by *uncontroverted* written Tradition, from the Time in which they were published, in a continued Train of Vouchers, down to the present Age ; the very *judaizing* Christians, who would not be determined by his Authority, as an Enemy to those *Jewish* Ceremonies, which they would have incorporated with Christianity, never denying him to be the real Author. St. *Peter* first of all gives a full Sanction to all his Epistles, giving us to understand, that they were read publicly, as other Scriptures, and that many made a bad Use of them. *Clemens Romanus* his Fellow-Labourer, whose Name is in the *Book of Life*, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, desires them to read again St. *Paul's* first Epistle to them, where he bids them shun Divisions, while one said I am of *Paul*, another I am of *Apollos*, another of *Cephas*. *Ignatius*, in his first Epistle to the *Ephesians*, makes Mention of St. *Paul's* to them. *Polycarp*, writing to the *Philippians*, very warmly recommends St. *Paul's* Epistle to them, with high Commendations, both of the Author and his Composition.

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fiction. And these three last mentioned Writers in the Apostolical Age, beautify their own Performances with Quotations from his. If then St. *Paul's* Epistles, for which we have uncontradicted decisive Evidence, be genuine, Christianity will stand it's Ground: For they contain all the essential and vital Articles, all the main *Stamina* of the Christian Doctrine.

Besides, he must have little Knowledge of *Painting*, that cannot discover St. *Paul's* Letters to be *Originals*: His very *Soul* speaks in all his Writings. There is that undissembled Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Mankind; that Courage; that beautiful Disregard to his own Interest, when it interfered with higher Views; that Boldness of Expression, that Life and Spirit, which is hard to be counterfeited. The same Force and Energy, which animated all his *Actions*, and empowered him to spread the Gospel from East to West, ennobles all his *Compositions*; and it would be almost as impossible for an Impostor to *write*, as St. *Paul* did; as it would be to *act*, as he did. It is very difficult to *personate* a warm, affectionate, interesting Writer. We may trace the same Features,

tures, and an exact Resemblance in his ^{SERMON} _{III.} *Speeches* in the *Acts* of *Apostles*, and in his *Epistles*, which proves them both to be the Offspring of the same Parent. In both there is the same Greatness of Spirit; the same glowing Language, and elevated Thoughts, warm from the Heart. In both he either speaks or writes with too animated a *Zeal* to be a cold *Deceiver*, with too much *Sense*, Solidity, and Consistency to be an *Enthusiast*.

Let us review the Ground which we have already gained.

Those Authors, according to the celebrated Maxim of *Huetius*, are genuine, that are quoted as such by Writers, in or next to the Times they were said to write, and so downwards, by succeeding Ages, in an uninterrupted Series. If this Axiom be not granted, all Historical Evidence must fall to the Ground: We may reject all ancient Historians; for it is the only Evidence we have of their being authentic. But, besides this Evidence, which the Scriptures have in *common* with ancient Writers, they have several *additional* Enforcements, which other Writers have not, *viz.* the Impossibility that a Forgery, in a Matter of such vast Consequence, should

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should gain Footing throughout the Christian World, and be received with the profoundest Veneration, in all their religious Assemblies, when living near the Fountain Head, they could not want Opportunity and Power to detect it, if it had been such; and being exposed continually to Martyrdom, they could have no Interest to acknowledge it as such, in Contradiction to their own Sentiments. The less Interest they had to embrace the Books, the more Evidence they would require. Men do not care to part with their Lives, and all that is dear and valuable to them, upon Uncertainties and groundless Reports.

The Scriptures have *travelled* to us with the *Passport* of all former Ages, from their *first setting out* into the World, down to the present Times. While the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, were living, it was *too early* to obtrude any forged Books upon the World with Success; because they both could, and undoubtedly would, have detected them. But after the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, were dead, it was *too late* to impose upon the World any spurious Compositions; because then the genuine Works were every where received;

received; which could not in a *Trice* be ^{SERMON}
spirited away, and others, as it were by ^{III.}
Inchantment, substituted in their Room,
without any Notice taken.

In short, if Books which have all the
unexceptionable Credentials, internal and
external, of being genuine, that any an-
cient Record can have, be, after all, mere
Forgeries; then we have nothing to do, but
to commit to the Flames all past Records,
and to believe Nothing but what we see.
But if this be impossible; then the Scrip-
tures, the Book of Grace; and the World,
the Book of Nature; both composed by
the same Hand, both having impressed up-
on them the most lively Traces of divine
Goodness and Benevolence, will *only perish*
together: And the Scriptures, the Ground-
work and *Pillar of our Faith*, will last,
till *Faith* be *lost* in *Intuition*.

Having proved the Genuineness of the
Books of the New Testament; I now
proceed,

Illy, To prove the Authors were di-
vinely inspired.

By Inspiration I mean the Action of God
upon Men's Minds, conveying Truths to
them,

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them, and impressing Sentiments upon them, in an extraordinary Manner.

The Possibility of this admits of no Dispute. The Power of God, which enables us to communicate our Thoughts to one another, can also undoubtedly communicate his Thoughts to us; and make us as intimately conscious, that those Impressions are made by *him solely*, as that *any* Impressions are made upon us *at all*. It will be more material to state the Case, because there has been some Confusion on this Head.

We must distinguish between an Assistance of *Direction*, from the Holy Spirit; and an Assistance of *immediate Suggestion*. In relating Matters of Fact, of which the Apostles were Eye-Witnesses, or in pointing out Things, whereof they had a previous and competent Knowledge; there the Assistance of *Direction* from the Holy Spirit was only wanting, to guard them from any Error, at least any material Error; that they should not insert any Falshood, or leave out any momentous Truth. But in Cases, which were plainly above their Reach, such as clearly explaining, and strongly enforcing, a compleat unerring System of religious and moral Truths, as
discovering

discovering those Sanctions, which *Eye had*^{SERMON}
not seen, nor Ear heard, nor had it entered^{III.}
into the Heart of Man to conceive; in re-
 vealing Mysteries, and declaring Things to
 come; an immediate *Suggestion* of the
 Holy Spirit was requisite to imprint these
 Truths upon their Minds, and to enable
 them to convey them to us: Their natural
 Abilities being unequal to the Task.

We do not maintain, that every Word
 or Sentence in the Holy Scriptures, was
dictated immediately by God: St. Paul
 might salute the Brethren, and write for
 what he wanted from *Troas*, without any
supernatural Assistance: For what Men
know, without any immediate Impulse from
 God; that they may certainly *write*, with-
 out any immediate Impulse from him. Nay,
 we may make a larger Concession, and
 allow, without any great Disadvantage to
 the Christian Cause, that there may be in
 Scripture some few Inaccuracies, as to the
 Point of Language, and other unconcern-
 ing Niceties. For this will only prove,
 that, where there was *no extraordinary Oc-*
casion to interpose, God *did not* think fit
 to interpose in an *extraordinary* Manner.
 All, that we contend for, is this; that in
 I the

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SERMON the doctrinal and prophetical Parts of Scrip-
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ture, and whatever else was necessary to be revealed; the Apostles wrote from the *immediate Suggestion* of the Holy Spirit: And as to all other Things, that sacred Person *so far superintended* and directed them, as to *secure* them from *Error*: It not being consistent with the Honour of God to suffer those, who by Miracles proved a Mission from him, to stamp a Credit upon Falshood, by Virtue of that Mission.

Having thus far cleared the Way, I shall proceed to prove the Matter of Fact, that the Apostles were actually inspired.

Now it is certain, that the Apostles were inspired, in propagating and *preaching* the Gospel: Men of their Education could never acquire such a prodigious Variety of Languages, as enabled them to speak to the several Nations, where they travelled, in their own native Tongues, and to spread the Gospel from East to West, to the uttermost Parts of the known World. This Command of several Tongues, by which they were empowered to make Converts in the remotest Countries, cannot be accounted for in a *natural* Way; it must be the Effect of *Inspiration*.

Now

Now if God inspired them in the Affair of *Preaching*; it will follow much more strongly, that he inspired them in committing, what they preached, to *Writing*: Since their *Preaching* was confined within a narrower Circle, and operated but upon Few in *Comparison*. But their Writings took in a wider Sphere, were of a more *diffusive Influence*, and were intended to reach to all *Ages*, as well as extend to all Nations.

I have already proved, in a former Discourse, that the Miracles recorded in Scripture were wrought by God; and that we have sufficient Evidence, that such Miracles were actually wrought.—If then such Miracles were performed; such an uninterrupted Profusion of unrivalled wondrous Works was given by him, who doth nothing in vain, for some *important End*.—No other important End can be assigned, but the rescuing Mankind from Error, and discovering to them necessary Truth.—Where God designs the End, he must design the Means requisite to that End.—The Means requisite to that End are to preserve his Instruments, in revealing his Will, from every material Mistake.—

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Consequently, we may implicitly acquiesce in the Belief of the Scriptures. For, if there are no material Mistakes, it can do us no Harm to believe, what will no Way affect us.—But if there are material Errors, which may affect our Happiness; then God's Design, in which he embarked, proved abortive; and that mighty *Apparatus*, that Waste of Miracles, answered no rational End at all, if it did not compass this End, *viz.* to guide Mankind to beneficial Truth, and to rescue them from Falshood.

Divine Credentials (such are Miracles) prove a divine Mission:—He who has a divine Mission, thus attested, speaks with Authority from God.—He who speaks with Authority from God, must speak several *important* Truths, and can speak Nothing, *but* the Truth. For God will never authorise a Falshood, or lend his Power to countenance a Lie. When therefore we are asked, whether the Apostles, who were *but* Men, could be infallible? we answer, that in the *common* Scenes, and *ordinary* Occurrences of Life, they were fallible, like other Men; but when they acted in their *extraordinary* Capacity, as *Ambassadors*

dors of God, as Prophets and Apostles; there they must be considered as infallible. Had they grossly mistaken, or wilfully misrepresented the divine Will; God would have *revoked* the Commission, which they had *abused*, for the same Reason that he *authorized* them at first; and would have invested some other Persons with superior Powers to confront them, and to disabuse the World from any Error, that might be imposed upon it in his sacred Name. How weak, when considered in this Light, is the Objection against Inspiration, from the Disagreement of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the latter at *Antioch* withstood the former to the Face? For, supposing that St. Peter had differed from St. Paul, in a Point of *Doctrine* and Principle, and not, as he only did, in a Point of *Behaviour*; yet what would be the mighty formidable Consequence, that could be drawn from thence? Nothing would follow but this, *viz.* that, when any Person sent by God should attempt to deceive others; the Deity would raise up some other Man, who should be effectually enabled to withstand him, to undeceive Mankind, and to prevent that Mischief, which his Falling off

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SERMON from the Truth might otherwise occasion.
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Besides these Arguments for Inspiration, from Miracles in general, and from the Gift of Tongues in particular; another arises from the Prophecies; such as those of *Daniel*, concerning *Alexander's* Conquest over the *Persians*, the amazing Rapidity with which he subdued *Persia*, *Asia*, and *India*, intimated in this Expression, *he touched not the Ground*, that is, he rather flew than went, he reduced them in a less Compass of Time, than a Traveller could have taken an accurate Survey of them. He goes on, in his eighth Chapter, to foretel that, after *Alexander's* Death, his Kingdom should be divided into four Parts, which accordingly came to pass; that out of one of them should arise a King, (*Antiochus Epiphanes*) who should harass and persecute the *Jews*, and profane the Temple. These Predictions are so clear and punctual, that *Porphyry* could not evade the Force of them, but by supposing, without any Grounds, that the Book was forged after the Events. To disprove this unsupported Supposition, it is enough to observe, that the whole *Jewish Nation* could not be

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consenting

consenting to, or imposed upon, by a Fraud of this Nature, so as to receive a Forgery into the Sacred Canon, at a Time when it was divided into several religious Sects and Parties, which kept a watchful Eye over one another, at a Time, when the Zeal of the *Jews* for their sacred Writings was so great, that they refused to deliver them up to *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and were resolved to sacrifice their Lives, rather than part with them.

But supposing these Prophecies forged after the Events; what shall we say as to those, which we know to be verified at this Day? viz. *Egypt shall be the BASEST of Kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself ANY MORE above the Nations. For I will diminish them, that they shall NO MORE rule over the Nations, Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.* And again, *Babylon shall be no more inhabited for EVER, neither shall it be dwelt in from Generation to Generation, Jer. l. 39.* And again, *Ye (the Jews) shall be scattered among all Nations, from one End of the Earth to the other, and shall become an Astonishment, a Proverb, and a By-Word among all Nations.*

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Our Saviour foretels, that *not one Stone* of the *Jewish Temple* should be left upon another : And, when *Julian* the Emperor endeavoured to rebuild it, “ dreadful Balls “ of Fire breaking from the Foundation, “ made the Place inaccessible. The “ Workmen, as oft as they repeated their “ Efforts, were at several Times destroyed; “ and, the Element repulsing them so often, as if it were designedly, the Enterprize was baffled.” These last are the Words of *Ammianus Marcellinus*, an Heathen Historian, who was an Officer under *Julian*. Thus this Emperor, by endeavouring to invalidate our Saviour’s Prediction, concerning the Destruction of the *Jewish Church* and State, till the Fullness of the Gentiles should come in, only confirmed it the more.

These Prophecies, and many others, to which the Events exactly corresponded, give an incontestable Proof, that the Scriptures are the Word of God; since none but God can discover future Events, which depend upon the Determination of free Agents.

A *partial Inspiration*, is to all Intents and Purposes the same as *no Inspiration at all*. For Mankind would be as much *embarrassed*

of the Sacred Writers.

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barrass'd, to know *what* was *inspired*, and ^{SERMON} what was *not*; as they could be to *collect* a ^{III.} Religion for *themselves*: The Consequence of which would be, that we are left, just where we were before; and that God put himself to a great Expence of Miracles to effect nothing at all: A Consequence highly derogatory and injurious to his Honour. It is much more consistent with God's Honour to suppose, that, when he thought fit to interpose himself, he took Care to display Truth in it's genuine and native Simplicity, without any baser Alloys; that he made his Revelation all of a Piece, and, like himself, *pure unmixed Light*, in which *there is no Darknefs*, no Error, no Falseness; than to fancy he did his Work by *Halves*, let others adulterate his Suggestions with their own impure Mixtures, and, in a motley Piece, blend, what ought always to be kept distinct, the Doctrines of God, and the Inventions of Men.

It is no Argument against universal Inspiration; that St. Paul declares, *to the Rest speak I, not the Lord*. For the Meaning is not, that he was destitute of Inspiration; but that the Lord (our Saviour) had not, during his Life, spoken and deter-

mined concerning the Point in Debate, concerning unequal Marriages, of a Believer, for Instance, with an Infidel. That this is the Sense appears from what goes before : *To the Married speak not I, but the Lord.* That is, though our Saviour had left the Point of unequal Marriages undetermined, yet he had decided the Case of Divorces. St. Paul does not declare he was uninspired ; but that our Lord had not pronounced a definitive Sentence on certain Points. As little can be gathered from these Words, *I suppose, I have the Spirit of the Lord* : For they are an Irony, in answer to those, who called in Question the Truth of his Mission, as much as to say, " What-
 " ever you may imagine, who oppose my
 " Mission ; yet I, who should know best,
 " with humble Deference to your Judg-
 " ment, suppose, I have the Spirit of the
 " Lord."

Whatever Disputes may be raised about the *Degree* of Inspiration ; it is an obvious Conclusion of Reason ; that, when God designed to notify his Will to Mankind, he would take Care that the Persons commissioned by him, for that Purpose, should publish what was his *Will* ; and Nothing
contradictory

contradictory or disagreeable thereto. Take SERMON
III. this Key in your Hand, and you unlock all the Difficulties, that have been advanced formerly, and revived of late, against Inspiration. For they none of them come fully up to the Point, as far as they are mere Difficulties: Nothing, but some flagrant *Inconsistency*, *Absurdity*, and *Falseness* can prove, that the Apostles wanted such an Assistance, Superintendency, or Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, (call it what you please) as was sufficient to preserve them from Error, and guide them to all necessary Truth: And, this being once allowed, the Bible is an infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

Now, as to the Charge of Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions; whatever has been urged on this Head, has been satisfactorily answered by several able Writers. But, supposing all Objections of this Kind could not be solved; it is much more reasonable to suppose, that they *may* admit of a *rational Solution*, though we at this Distance of Time, who want an adequate Knowledge of the Customs, Peculiarities, and Genius of the Eastern Nations, cannot hit upon it; than that a Religion

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ligion attested by *Miracles*, confirmed by *Prophecies*, and recommended by it's own *internal Excellency*, should be *false*.

We ought to pass the same Judgment upon God's Word, which we do upon his Works. In the latter there appear plain Signatures of Goodness and Wisdom throughout the whole Frame of Nature. But if among the Works of the Creation, which are *generally* excellent, there are some *particular* Exceptions, some Creatures, for Instance, which, far from answering any wise End which we can discern, are really noxious and baneful to the Rest: What do we infer from thence? That the Creation is not the Work of a wise and good God? Or even, that these Creatures were not formed by him? No, no such Thing: We conclude nothing, but that these Subjects lye too deep for us, and that our Views are too narrow to account for every Thing. Just so, the Characters of *Goodness* and *Wisdom* are *generally* impressed upon the Bible: And if in a Book *generally* so good and excellent there are some *particular* Things *hard to be understood*, nay, seemingly absurd; we ought to resolve it into our Want of Penetration and Discernment:
And

And we might as well argue, "several SERMON
III.
" Things in the Creation appear to us pro-
" ductive of Evil, and hurtful; and there-
" fore, because they are not of a Piece with
" the Rest of God's Works, they cannot be
" his Productions;" as pretend to reason
thus: "Such Texts seem unaccountable to
" us, and therefore we will not allow them
" to be wrote under the Direction of an
" All-wise Being." Instead of such a pre-
cipitate Judgment, it would be much wiser
to express ourselves as St. *Austin* did: "*What*
" *I understand* in Scripture, is excellent;
" and I do not question, but what I do *not*
" understand is so too." We should re-
member, that a Book, which speaks of
Things remote from common Apprehen-
sion, which lays before us *the deep Things*
of God, must in the Nature of the Thing
be more puzzling; than any Composition,
which contains the shallow Devices of an
Understanding like our own.

Men may retire into their Closets, and
there imagine with themselves, how easy
and plain a Book should be, which is of
a divine Original, without any amazing
Facts, without any dark and unintelligible
Passages; and when they find that the Re-
velation

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Revelation which we have, does not tally with their vain Imaginations, may presume to reject it. And, should they, instead of looking abroad, and seeing what the Administration of the Universe is in *Fact*, sit down and form *imaginary* Schemes, how God should govern the World; the Course of *Nature*, as it is in Reality, would no more correspond with their preconceived Hypothesis, than the *Scriptures* do. They would never imagine *a priori*, that a considerable Part of the rational World should be cut off, before they came to the Use of their Reason, and should just make their Entrance upon the Theatre of Nature, to go off again, without seeming to answer one valuable End or Purpose: They would never conceive, without seeing how Things really are, that there should be so much Evil, natural and moral, in the World; that several Nations should *sit in Darknests, and the Shadow of Death*. Every Thing in Nature surpasses our Comprehension; and we ourselves are the greatest Mysteries to ourselves: How we come into the World, how we are preserved in it, is an unfathomable Wonder.

One plain Argument, that God *has* made such a Revelation as we have, should outweigh

weigh a thousand plausible Conjectures brought SERMON
III. against it, to shew that it can be no Re-

velation from God: For, if it had, it must have been made in *such* a Manner, and *no other*. The Reason is as follows:

We can *easily judge* of the Strength of those Arguments, which prove that God has, in *Fact*, published his Will to Mankind; for they are *clear, full, and obvious*: But we are intirely *incompetent Judges*; how, in *what Manner*, with *what Degree* of Clearness in *every Point*, God, whose *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*, should publish his Will, *how much Light* it was proper he should communicate, and what *Intricacies* he might suffer, on Purpose to be the Tests of humble well-disposed Minds, and to be a *Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence*, to the Perverse and Disingenuous. We may conclude from the Uniformity of God's Proceedings, that *his revealed Will* must bear some Analogy and Correspondence to the *Constitution of Nature*, as settled by him. And when *every Thing* can be *accounted for*, and is easy to be understood, in the Conduct of *his Providence*; then, and not till then, we ought to expect, that *every Thing* should be so too in a *divine Revelation*.

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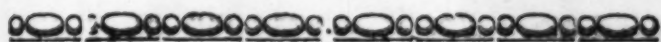
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SERMON IV.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Corruption of Human
Nature.



JOB XIV. 3, 4.

*Dost thou open thine Eyes upon such an
One, and bringest me into Judgment
with thee?*

*Who can bring a clean Thing out of an Un-
clean? Not one.*

THESE Words contain *Job's* EX-SERMON
postulation with his Maker, and IV.
the Sense of them, to use the
Words of a great Writer, who clearly
proves, that they have a plain Reference to
the Introduction of Corruption, by the Sin
of

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of the Woman, is as follows, "Why art thou extreme to mark all my Errors?"

"Is it reasonable to expect Purity in a Man born of a Woman, who is by the very Condition of his Birth unclean*?"

The Disobedience of our first Parents involved their Posterity, and entailed a Depravity of Nature upon their Descendants: Which Depravity, though it is not a Sin in *us*, till the Will closes with it; and deliberately consents to it; yet is certainly sinful in *itself*, and therefore is stiled Original Sin. For if it were not so, if the first Rise of evil Thoughts, and every Tendency and Bias to Vice were not criminal in *itself*; the Consent of the Will to it could never make it *so*. For the Consent of the Will cannot alter the Nature of Things.

St. Paul, Col. iii. 9, 10. says, *Ye have put off the old Man with his Deeds, and have put on the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge AFTER THE IMAGE of Him, that created him; or, as it is in another Place, Ephes. iv. 24. which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holi-*

* Bishop Sherlock's Second Dissertation, Pag. 253.

ness. Now to be renewed after the Image ^{SERMON} of our Creator, signifies in the Original, to ^{IV} receive again, what we had once lost. Man therefore once had (in his primitive State) that Image, to which he is to be restored by the Grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. This is the Sense which *Irenæus*, a Father of the second Century, puts upon these Words. For he says, "What we lost in *Adam*, viz. the divine Image and Likeness, " we receive again in *Christ Jesus* *."

Adam was formed in the Image of God; and what that Image was, we learn from the foregoing Words of *St. Paul*, *that ye put on the new Man, which, after God* (after the Image of God) *is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*. It is plain, that we who are *shapen in Wickedness*, who are born with strong Propensions to Vice, are not *created in Righteousness and true Holiness*: It is plain therefore, that we are fallen from our original and primitive State of Innocence.

Far be it from me to vilify human Nature, as if it were *totally* bad, without any Remains and Traces of it's primitive Greatness. I own, that any Man may, through

* *Irenæus*, Lib. 3. cap. 20.

the Grace of God and his own Endeavours, stand clear of all *presumptuous* Sins, and much more of all evil *Habits*. I own that our Passions are innocent in *themselves*, though they are often wrong in their *Degree*, being not very seldom disproportioned to the real Value of Things; very violent and exorbitant, where they ought to be moderate; and very moderate and remiss, where there is no eminent Danger of Excess. I grant, that, though our Nature is *degenerated*, yet it is not intirely *inverted*, so as to have no Relish for Goodness; that we are not only capable of Virtue, but also of great Attainments therein; we may not only be virtuous, but even *excel in Virtue*.

Notwithstanding, there are plain Proofs that we are fallen Creatures, from the Perverseness of our Will, and the Weakness of our Understanding.

For no Creature could come *originally* from God's Hand, but what was *perfect* in it's *Kind*: No *rational* Creature can be *perfect* in his Kind, in whom there is a strong Propension to *Vice*, that is, to what is *unreasonable*, and a great *Irregularity* of the Appetites and Affections. Had Man continued such as he was at first formed,
the

the *Balance* certainly must have been, at ^{SERMON} least, *even*, between the sensitive and in-^{IV.}tellectual Part in our Composition, between our Passions and our Reason: But that it is *not* so, is plain from this; that it is not the Province of Wisdom, to run into the Arms of a Temptation, and boldly to grapple with it; which when we do, we seldom fail of being foiled in the Conflict. But our Victory over Temptations is to decline a Combat with them; and a considerable Part of the Innocency, which is in the World, may be owing to the Want of Opportunities to commit Vice. There is a latent Stock of Corruption in us, though sometimes unsuspected by us, which often discovers itself, as soon as there are suitable Objects to call it forth. Hence it is, that few or none are to be trusted with absolute Power; because an unlimited Extent of Power gives those vicious Inclinations their full Play, which before were cramped and confined within narrow Bounds. We do not distrust ourselves; because we know not what is in ourselves. Many, who would have said, in a private Capacity, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do these Things?* have done the very Things in a

public Sphere, which they heartily condemned before. So much Reason is there for that Prayer, *Lord, deliver me from myself. He, that thinketh he standeth, let him take Heed, lest he fall*; then most especially, when he *thinketh* he standeth. For Security is our Ruin: And the Minute we are off our Guard, we may be surprized into Vice by a *powerful Tempter*, who knows each Avenue to the Soul, or by our own *Passions*, the *most powerful* Tempters of All. And he, who is now virtuous, is no more secure of continuing so, without much Circumspection, and the Grace of God; than he, who is in perfect Health, is safe against every Attack of Infection.

We see the wisest of Men, in their unguarded Hours, betrayed into unaccountable Follies; we startle at it, and cry out, *Lord, what is Man!* Why, a Being, who, without God's *upholding Power*, would the next Moment sink into *Nothing*; and, without the Assurances of his *Spirit*, would be a Sinner, that is, *worse than Nothing*; then always betraying his *Weakness*, when he depends presumptuously upon his own *Strength*; a *Child* ever in this Respect, that, if left to himself, *without the Guidance*

dance and *Support* of his heavenly *Parent*, SERMON
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he would *fall* and *injure* himself.

A Philosopher, in his Closet, makes many admirable Reflexions, and lays down excellent Rules for the Conduct of Life, under any Affliction or Provocation; yet, among his *many* fine *Reflexions*, he forgets *this One*, as true as any of them, *viz.* that all these Thoughts are the Result of a Mind *at Ease*; and therefore will certainly vanish and disappear, as soon as it is *not so*: Like the *Children of Ephraim*, who *being barnessed, carrying Bows*, and making a goodly Appearance, *turned themselves back in the Day of Battle*.

It is certain, that Reason was originally given us, to govern the Passions in all Cases: It is certain, that it does not now regulate and govern them in all Cases; it is certain therefore, that we are in a fallen disordered State. To give some Instances, Are there many of us, who when any great, immediate, and unforeseen Danger threatens, have so much Command of themselves, as to have just that Degree of Fear, which is necessary to alarm their Caution, and to prevent any Rashness; but is not so immoderate, as to upset the Spirits, and betray

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the Succours of Reason? If they have, they are more indebted for it to an *inborn Vigour* of Spirit, and a Familiarity with Danger, than to all the *Reasonings*, which Philosophy ever suggested. For that Courage, which depends upon Reason, is very precarious: It is like that Health, which is supported by constant Medicines: A native Strength of Constitution and constant Exercise is of infinitely more Service.

Take another Instance, how unequal the Conflict is between Reason and Passion. Suppose a Man over-whelmed with Sorrow; and produce your strong Reasons, why he ought not to grieve; and what will they avail? Length of Time shall abate and wear away that Sorrow, which Reason could not conquer: Nay, a trifling Diversion, suited to the Capacity of a Child, shall have greater Influence than all the Consolations of *Seneca* and *Epietetus*. To put a Man upon Thinking is not the most effectual Way of getting the better of immoderate Grief: The best Expedient is to divert his Thoughts. We confess ourselves to be *miserable Sinners*; and we are therefore most miserable under any Distress, *because we are Sinners*: And Sin, which

which is the Sting of *Death*, is likewise that of *Sorrow*. Were all right within their own Breasts, Men in Affliction might retreat within themselves, with as much Satisfaction, as they retire home, when the Storm beats hard upon them abroad. But the Reason, why they shun *themselves*, much more than the *World* does *them*, when unfortunate is, that, whatever Self-Complacency a Fulness of Spirits, the natural Result of uninterrupted Prosperity, might inspire; Adversity lowers their Thoughts as well as Spirits, and shews them to themselves in a Glass, which gives their real, not a flattering Likeness.

The Passions are certain *Willings* and *Nillings* in the Soul, attended with a *Commotion* of the *Blood* and *Spirits*. From hence an Argument may be drawn, that we are not in a primitive State of Order and Rectitude: For if we were, the Soul must be vested with a Power of *curbing* and controuling; or *quickenning* and exciting the Animal Spirits, according as *Reason* directs. But that the Soul is not invested with this Prerogative, we need not look far for Instances. For Example, Men of a cold phlegmatic Temper, have *Sense* enough to

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see their Duty, but not *Spirit* enough to act up to it *resolutely* in *all* Cases; a melancholy Chillness checks their Spirits, and damps their Endeavours; and they bring no *Fruit* to Perfection, for *Want* of a *kindly Warmth* to ripen it. *Forbearances* indeed of Action are always in their Power; and therefore they need not be *positively bad*, or commit any presumptuous Sin; but it is not in their Power, without the extraordinary Grace of God, to reach the *utmost Heights* and Attainments in *Virtue*. For Reason abstractedly from strong Passions, is a *sedentary Principle*; it is like the *Genius* of *Socrates*, which rather checked and restrained him, when he was going to do wrong, than put him upon vigorously pursuing what was right.

On the other Hand, the Men, in whose Composition Fire and Spirit is the predominant Ingredient, have an irregular Greatness of Soul, and strange Inequalities in their Conduct: The Great and the Extravagant bordering so near, that the Transition is easy from the one to the other. A generous Ardour of Soul is not many Removes distant from Enthusiasm and chimerical Designs: They *despise* and *disdain* *little* and *low* Sins, as what would make them

them cheap ; but they do not, it may be, SERMON
IV. *detest* and abhor *great Vices*. Whereas there

is a certain *Point* in *Virtue* and *Vice*, a certain *determined Proportion*, in *Goodness* and *Wickedness*, beyond which Men of *cool* and languid *Affections* dare not venture to proceed ; they, on the contrary, have always been *eminently good*, or *exceeding sinful*, or both at different Times. One would think, their good *Sense* should govern their enterprizing *Spirit* and *Ambition*: Alas ! too often, unless they have got a *Habit* of *Recollection*, their *Ambition* and fiery *Spirit* gets the better of their good *Sense*.

If Men proceed to *Action* while their *Passions* are warm, they do not see Things justly, and therefore are apt to act too hastily : If they stay till their *Passions* are cool, they are apt not to act at all ; their *Resolutions*, like *Fruit*, that rots by hanging too long on the *Tree*, come to *Nothing*.

But to shew more effectually, that we are a *Set* of *lapsed* and *distempered* *Creatures*, let it be observed, that we do not love or hate, rejoice or grieve, hope or fear, *so far*, as is consistent with *Reason*, and *no farther*. We love the Things of this *World*, *beyond* the *Proportion* of *Good* which

which is in them: The Love of Virtue and heavenly Happiness does not *keep Pace* with the *Worth* of the Objects beloved. The least Glance of Reflexion will shew, how often we have been *disquieted* with *little Things*, and *pleased* with *as little*. Strange! that we should not make one Reflexion more, *viz.* how *little* we *ourselves* must be, who can be thus pleased and disquieted above Measure. The Fear of Evils to come, is often more tormenting than the Evils themselves: There is *only one Thing* we cannot dread too much, and that is God's Displeasure. *For even thereafter as a Man feareth*, sayeth the Psalmist, *so is his Displeasure*: That is, let a Man's Fears be raised to never so high a Pitch; God's Displeasure is an Evil fully proportioned to them: Yet fearing every other Ill too much, we have not just Apprehensions of his Vengeance. Is there a Man who does not feel the Force of *Isaiab's* significant Expostulation? *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a Man, that shall die, and of the Son of Man, that shall be made as Grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the Heavens, and laid the Foundation of the Earth? Yet*

this Being, awfully just, the almost only Object, *that ought to be feared*, is the almost only Object, which we do not sufficiently fear. And he can be regardless of the Wrath of an *Almighty God*, who is intimidated by a *Shadow*, an *Insect*, a *Worm*, and the *Son of Man*, who is a *Worm*. What a Contradiction is Man! this Minute perhaps indulging *serious Reflexions*, the next, the *Sport of idle Passions*. If we raise our Thoughts to the Author of our Being; the least Trifle, the least striking Object upon Earth, shall be able to divert our Attention, and to call off our Mind, which was on the Wing, from thence. A Creature, that soars aloft to the Skies, yet, if it sees any Thing, however low and paltry, to gratify it's Appetite, makes a Stoop from it's lofty Flights, is a proper Emblem of such inconsistent Creatures as we are. The Truth is, ever since the Fall, the Body clogs the native Energy of the Soul, and pins it down to this low ignoble Sphere; though it has an inborn Consciousness of being intended for a much higher and nobler Scene of Action. The Soul is like a *King deposed*: However confined and imprisoned in a *Dungeon*, he is conscious, that he

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he was *born* to and designed for a *Throne*.
 We feel a *Law* in our Members, warring
 against the *Law* of our Mind, and bringing
 us into *Captivity*. And to have all our
 Thoughts laid open to the View of the
 World, to be *naked*, yet *not ashamed*, might
 do well enough in a State of Innocence,
 but does not suit our lapsed Condition.

A Being of infinite *Holiness* and *Purity*,
 who *hates* Sin, could never create a Being
immediately, without any Contagion derived
 in a natural Way from our first Parents,
 who should labour under a *moral Impossibility*
 of avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times. Now that
 Man labours under a moral Impossibility of
 avoiding *all Sin*, at all Times, is evident from
 hence, *viz.* that, what *no mere Man* ever *did*
 do, it is morally impossible, any Man ever
should do. Now no mere Man, from the first
 Stage of his Existence to the last Period of
 it, ever discharged all the Duties of Life,
 without any Omission, and abstained from
 the Commission of every Vice. It is evident
 therefore, to the Force of a Demonstration,
 that Man is a fallen Creature, and 'not such
 as he came, originally, out of the Hands of
 an infinitely pure and holy Being. *Who*
can

of Human Nature.

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can say, *I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* Prov. xx. 9. IN MAN-
NY Things we offend all.

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Into what can this *universal Depravation*, which prevails every where, more or less, among the Sons of Men, be resolved, but into an *universal Cause*, the inborn Corruption of Nature, and an original Taint, derived from our first Parents? Can it be resolved into Education? Many Parents, after all the Care which they have laid out, in educating their Children virtuously, have Reason to expostulate, as God, the common Parent of us all, does in *Isaiah*, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked, that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* The only Way to educate Children rightly, is to teach them early to deny themselves the Gratification of those irregular Appetites, which Nature has implanted *. Self-Will, Stubbornness, and an Inclination to Things forbidden, merely because they are forbidden, discover themselves even in our Infancy:

* Vidi ego, & expertus sum Zelantem parvulum. Non-dum loquebatur, & intuebatur pallidus amaro Aspectu col-lactaneum suum. Sancti Augustini Confess. Lib. 1. cap. 7.

Vice is the natural Product of the Soil; the more uncultivated the Mind is, the more it is overrun with it: But Virtue is the slow laborious Result of repeated Self-Denials, Hardships, and Difficulties.

If Mankind were in a State of Integrity, and primitive Uprightness; there could scarce be, one would think, so much Evil in the World, as there really is. A great Part of Mankind seems to resemble the *Dæmoniac* in the Gospel, who *had been often bound with Fetters and Chains; and the Chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the Fetters broken in Pieces, and no Man could tame him.* They are curbed and restrained by divine and human Laws, by temporal Penalties, and the Dread of eternal Misery; and yet one impetuous Passion breaks through all these strong Fences, just as a Thread of Tow is snapped asunder, when it toucheth the Fire. It argues a strange Ignorance of the World, to expect that Men should be swayed by *calm rational* Motives only, and by the Charms of Virtue. The very Necessity of Government is founded chiefly upon this, that Men are not fit to be trusted with the Government of themselves, without any Check

or

or Controul upon them. And if any Man should attempt to govern a single Family only, by pure Reason, without exerting any Act of Authority; Experience would soon convince him, that he had been forming a visionary Scheme. How comes it, unless we are in a State of Degeneracy, that Reason, which was originally designed to be the governing Principle, is so feeble; and the Passions, which should be subject to it, so headstrong?

Man was originally formed for the Knowledge and Worship of God only: Yet, in all Countries unenlightened by Revelation, Men were so far from knowing and adoring the true God, that they were universally immersed in Idolatry and Superstition. All the Nations even now, as well as of old, where Revelation hath not got Footing, bear Testimony to the Weakness of human Understanding. The Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth, was not discovered by us, it was revealed to us. And what Mankind did not ascertain for so many Ages, till the Propagation of Christianity; they probably would never have discovered, to the End of the World, if left to themselves, without any Assistances

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ances from Heaven. But these, you will say, were the Errors of the Gross of the Species : The Philosophers knew undoubtedly and taught better Things. So far from that, that they admitted as great Absurdities, only of another Kind : Some of them asserting God to be, the Soul of the World, of which our Souls were so many Parts, and into which they were to be resolved, after the Dissolution of the Body ; others of them maintaining, that the *Æther*, or empty Space, was God ; others, the whole World ; and some few only contending, that he was an infinite Mind, which great Truth, however, they blended with very erroneous Notions.

Again, Man was formed for *loving his Neighbour as himself*. Yet the World is generally inclined to the ill-natured Side, slow to believe what is advantageous to a Man's Character, but ready to credit any blackening Reports. Are Men *grateful* in Proportion as they are *resentful* ? Their Hearts burn within them with Resentment for an Injury received ; nay, sometimes for a Favour refused : But do they feel as lively a Glow of Gratitude, when some Kindness is done them ?

Observe

Observe the Man, who makes Pretensions to an exalted and disinterested Benevolence: Perhaps, after all his Pretensions, an agreeable enchanting Form shall make it's Way irresistibly to his Heart, and, at a Heat, in a Moment, stamp upon his Mind more tender and endearing Sentiments, and recommend the Person, who is the Owner of it, more powerfully to his Affection; than long tried and approved Worth, and an uninterrupted Intercourse of friendly Offices, can another, who is destitute of that Advantage. There is nothing so insignificant, by which we differ from one another, but about which we may differ likewise: Inso-much, that the Word *Difference*, which originally signifies, that Things are not the same, is made Use of to express Discord and Animosity.

Again, we were designed for an exact Knowledge of ourselves. Yet, seeing every Thing else through a Glass darkly, we see ourselves through a flattering Glass, in the fairest and brightest Light. But could we, several of us, view ourselves just as we are, without those false Colours, and gilded Lustre, which Self-Love sheds around it's Votaries; it might be a greater

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Misery to us, than any we ever felt. For in all other Cases, an imaginary Worth affords a fantastic Pleasure, which buoys up our Spirits, and is a Kind of Counterpoise to those Sufferings, which we undergo, however solid and real. But in this Case, Misery, genuine Misery, would have it's full Effect, without any Consideration to break the Force of it. Many of us must, in some Measure, *deceive ourselves* to be tolerably happy: To disabuse the Mind of it's ill-grounded Esteem, and strip it of every agreeable but wrong Idea, would sink several of us into a Set of joyless, dull, spiritless Creatures. It would be to turn us out of a *Fool's Paradise*, where the Mind was delightfully lost and bewildered, among gay *Delusions* and fine *visionary Scenes*, into a dreary Heath and barren *Wilderness*, where there was little or *nothing* goodly, fair, and amiable.

Lastly, we were formed for the Attainment of beneficial Truth, and Yet there are not many certain Truths, demonstrable from *intrinsic* Evidences, from the abstract Nature of the Thing; though Reason can prove several, by the Help of *external* Evidences. Setting Revelation aside, Man-

kind

kind would have Reason to wish that they did not know so much as they do; or that they knew a great Deal more. At present they have just Knowledge enough to disquiet and perplex them, but not enough, without the Scriptures, to make them easy. In a total Darkness they would view Nothing at all, and in a full Day-Light they would view Objects clearly and justly: But in a Twilight of Knowledge they imagine they see Things, that are *not*; and see Things, that *are*, otherwise than they really are. Youth, sanguine Youth, may be positive and peremptory, and fancy it knows every Thing, because as yet it knows Nothing fully. But Men, who have read, and studied, and thought much, towards the Close of Life, retain scarce one Sentiment unaltered and unimproved, which they had at their first Entrance upon their Studies: Just as that famed Vessel, which had been in several Voyages, and first sailed round the Globe, had scarce one Plank the same, upon it's Arrival in Port, with which it was first launched. There are several considerable Truths, which, like the great Author of Truth, *dwell in Light which no Man can approach to*: Whatever Evi-

dences they may be surrounded with, they are inaccessible to us.

I might proceed, to demonstrate the Truth of the Fall from those plain Monuments of it, those Miseries which, in Consequence of it, were introduced into the World. Can it be proved, that natural Good and natural Evil are so closely connected, that there could not be such a Quantity of natural Good, except there was just such a Quantity of natural Evil too? That, for Instance, the World could not be so happy; except there were so many acute and painful Diseases; so many noxious Insects, Famines, Eruptions from burning Mountains, &c.? Are these, what God, upon a Review of the Creation, pronounced *very good*? No, there is no accounting for so much *natural* Evil, except it was sent as a standing Indication of God's Displeasure against those *moral* Disorders, which prevailed in the World, consequent to the Fall.

People may, I know, start many Difficulties upon this Head. But it is, I think, not so reasonable to suppose, that God created Man *originally bad*; as that, when Man *had* corrupted his Nature, he let that Corruption

of Human Nature.

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Corruption descend upon his Posterity, in ^{SERMON} a *natural* Way. Just as it would be ^{IV.} more irreconcilable to the Sentiments, which we have, of the Deity, to imagine, he would *immediately* form a Creature *disordered* in his Senses; than that, when a Parent had brought this Distemper upon himself by Debauchery, he permitted the Madness to *devolve* upon his Children.

It is one Thing to say, that God was, or could be the *Author of Evil*; and another to say, that, when Evil was *introduced* by Man, he did not work a *Miracle*, to prevent the *natural* Consequences of it; but *suffered* it for the Sake of bringing a *greater* Good out of it; and that by the *Redemption*, he has advanced Man to much *superior* Happiness, than he could have had any Title to, if he had *continued* in a State of *Innocence*. This is the *Scriptural* Solution of the Difficulty. *Where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. As in Adam all die; so in Christ shall all be made alive. As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; so the Grace of God hath abounded unto all Men, through Jesus Christ.* This

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was the *Labour of Love* (if any Thing to *Love* can be a *Labour*) to countervail the ill Effects of the Fall, by an universal Remedy.

However great a Mystery the Transmission of Sin may be, which yet is not a greater Difficulty, than the Transmission of Madness, or any other Disease, from Father to Son; yet *Man*, without this Clue to unravel the Intricacies of his Nature, is a greater *Mystery* to himself, than the *Transmission* of Sin can be to him. Original Sin cannot be so inconceivable by him, as he is by himself without it. For, pray observe: It cannot enter into the Head of Man to conceive greater Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contrarieties, than he may find, if he looks honestly and fairly into it, in his own Heart. How many pious Resolutions he forms, which, perhaps, dye in Embryo, before they ripen into Birth; and yet how many foolish and vain Projects: His Thoughts now aspiring to, and grasping after, heavenly Happiness, and anon sinking into the Dregs of Corruption! He is a strange Compound of Excellency and Baseness; of the Angel and the Brute; a motley Mixture of Knowledge

ledge and Ignorance, of Virtue and Vice, of Happiness and Misery; the Flesh warring against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; two such mortal Enemies, that they are continually jarring and opposing each other; and yet two such dear Friends, that they dread a Separation from each other.

Let then the Difficulties of the Fall be never so great; yet, there is no getting rid of them, but at the Expence of an Absurdity, the greatest of Absurdities, viz. that Creatures so corrupt as we are, could be immediately formed by an infinitely perfect God, (who cannot behold Iniquity and Corruption with Pleasure) without any Contagion derived from, and transmitted to us, by our first Parents. Let a Man look within himself, and he will find, he will feel, a Demonstration of one Part of the Scriptures, the Truth of the Fall: Or, if he cannot see it there, he will prove by his very Blindness, the Truth which he denies. But if he admits this Part of the Scriptures to be true, I cannot perceive, why he should demur as to the rest. For there is no Part of them which is attended with greater Difficulties. "I appeal (*says a*

(Hvely Writer) "to yourself, in your own
 " Degree of Goodness, if you could create
 " your own Children, whether you would
 " not create them in a better State, and
 " with less of Evil, than that in which
 " you was born yourself. Therefore, only
 " supposing God to have your Degree of
 " Goodness, he could not have created
 " the first Man, from whom your Nature
 " is derived, in the State that you are;
 " and therefore, supposing him only to be
 " good, you have sufficient Proof; but
 " supposing him to be, what he undoubt-
 " edly is, infinitely good, you have a full
 " Demonstration, that you are a fallen
 " Creature, or not in that State in which
 " God created you."

What remains, but that we strive to re-
 cover that Happiness, by our Humility
 and Meekness, which our first Parents lost
 by Pride? He who is *truly* a moral Man,
 will not, if unprejudiced, be *merely* so.
 For he, who is truly a moral Man, will
 be humble; and he, who is humble, will
 not trust in his own Righteousness, or
 make any proud Pretensions to exalted
 Worth. The Consideration and Sense of
 his Unworthiness, will dispose him to ac-

of Human Nature.

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cept the Offers of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and make him endeavour to fulfil the Terms of it. He, who has no high Notions of his own Merits, will be glad to be accepted by those of his blessed Saviour.

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SERMON V.

On the REDEMPTION.

In Two SERMONS.

Preached, in Part, at the Lady Mary's
Lecture, in the Year 1739, and, since
that Time, considerably altered.

1 PETER III. 18.

Christ also hath once suffered for Sin, the
Just for the Unjust, that he might bring
us unto God.

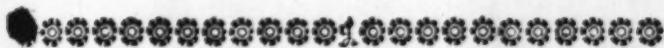
W HAT is said of the great Differences
of Morality, and the Difference
between Virtue and Vice, will
ask your own Heart, and nothing is so
plain: It is to mistake themselves the Pain
and Time, may, with a little Variation, be
applied to the fundamental Doctrines of
Christianity.

SERMON V.

On the REDEMPTION.

IN TWO SERMONS.

Preached, in Part, at the Lady Moyer's
Lecture, in the Year 1733; and, since
that Time, considerably altered.



1 PETER III. 18.

*Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the
Just for the Unjust, that he might bring
us unto God.*

WHAT is said of the great Duties SERMON
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of Morality, and the Difference
between Virtue and Vice, viz.
*Ask your own Heart, and Nothing is so
plain: It is to mistake them costs the Pain
and Time; may, with a little Variation, be
applied to the fundamental Doctrines of
Christianity,*

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Christianity, viz. the Trinity and Satisfaction: *Search the Scriptures, and Nothing can be plainer, or more easy to find there: Not to find them there, or, to speak more properly, to explain them away when found, requires a great Deal of Labour, Subtlety, and uncommon Dexterity.* The natural Import of the Words of my Text is this, that Christ died, not merely for our Benefit, as an Example of Patience, and to confirm the Truth of his Doctrine, by his Blood; but, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, that we might, by Virtue of his meritorious Sufferings, be redeemed from the Punishment due to them. The Words of St. Paul, *Romans v. 7, 8.* confirm the Sense of this Text, *Scarcely for a righteous Man will one die: We per-adventure, for a good Man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.* Our Saviour died for us, in the same Sense, that one Man would dare to die for another, whom he greatly loved, by substituting himself in the Room of us Sinners. So David says, *Would to God, I had died for thee, or instead of Thee, O Absalom, my Son.* God

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hath made him, who knew no Sin, to be Sin, or an Offering for Sin, for us. Accordingly *Isaiah* saith: *Thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin.*

Again; our Saviour is said to *bear our Iniquities.* The obvious Sense of which Passage will appear, by comparing it with another: *The Son shall not bear the Iniquities of the Father,* i. e. the Son shall not suffer instead of, or for the Sins of, the Father.

In a Word, the Scripture Proofs of the Redemption are so many, that it would be endless to quote them All; and so well known, that it is almost needless to quote Any. And we must either look upon a Doctrine, which is inculcated in such a Variety of Expressions, and upon which such an uncommon Stress is laid, to be of the very Essence of Christianity; or we must look upon the Scriptures, as a Book not designed to teach and inform, but to confound, puzzle, and mislead Mankind.

And since our Adversaries pretend, they have Recourse to a figurative Sense; because the literal one is big with Absurdities; I shall therefore endeavour,

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Ist, To disprove and confute those Schemes, which they have advanced, in Opposition to the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation by Jesus Christ.

Ildly, I shall make it my Business to rescue the Method of our Salvation, as laid down in Sacred Writ, from the Charge of Absurdities, with which they load it.

Ist then, I shall endeavour to disprove and confute those Schemes, which they have advanced, in Opposition to the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation by Jesus Christ.

The first Scheme which I shall consider is, That our own intrinsic Worth, or right Behaviour, must be the Foundation of our Acceptance with God; and not what another has done for us; which can never render us personally pleasing to or approved by God.

The second Hypothesis, which will fall under Consideration, is, That God is obliged to accept of Repentance, in lieu of perfect Obedience, without any Atonement.

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As to the first,

It is alledged, that God does not approve, or disapprove, from capricious Humour or arbitrary Pleasure, but from the real Valuableness or Unworthiness of such the Object of his Approbation or Dislike: And that therefore, Nothing but Men's right Behaviour could make them the Objects of God's Favour.

To unravel which Fallacy,

In the first Place, we must carefully distinguish between the *Approbation*, and the *Good-will*, or *Benevolence*, of the Deity. For the Deity just so far *approves* of Beings, as they are really *good*, and his Approbation is always proportioned to the several Degrees of Goodness in them. But his *Benevolence* need not keep exact *Pace* with, and be *determined* solely, and wholly, by his Approbation and their Goodness. The *Approbation* of an unerring Being must, in the Nature of the Thing, be founded on something *intrinsic*, and in the Beings *approved*: But his *Benevolence* often does, and in some Cases must, proceed from Motives *extrinsic* to the Beings themselves: Of which, among many others, the Communication of *greater* Degrees of Happiness

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ness to *some* Beings than *others*, antecedently to, and therefore, without any Regard to, their *Merits*, at the first Creation, is a pregnant Instance. And he who made *some* Beings *Angels* and not *Men*, for no other Reason than his own *WILL*; may, certainly, advance us from *Men* into *Angels* of Bliss, at the *Instance* and *Intercession* of our blessed Saviour. It may be granted, that the Deity cannot love any Being farther, than it is lovely in itself, with a Love of *Esteem*, *Complacency*, or *Good-liking*. And yet there may be a considerable Degree of *Benevolence* and *Good-will* in the Deity, towards Beings, for whom he has but a slender Share of *Esteem* and *Approbation*. The Reason is very plain: The *Benevolence* of the Deity is *infinite*; but his *Approbation* is *finite*, and *adjusted* to the intrinsic Worth of each Creature, be it less or more. Our personal Valuableness therefore, or our right Behaviour, may be the only Ground of the divine *Approbation*; but God forbid, that it should be the *only* Ground of his *Favour* and *Acceptance*. Supposing the Deity to be infinitely Good, and to take a *Delight* in communicating *Happiness* to his Creatures, there

there will always be a strong Reason for ^{SERMON} his Beneficence, or the Communication of ^{V.} Good to us, when there lyes no Reason *against* it. The only Reasons, that could lye against it, were—either that we were Subjects intirely indisposed for, and incapable of, Happiness, through our *evil* and inveterate *Habits*—or that it was not consistent with God's Wisdom, Justice, and his Regard for the Whole, to admit us to a State of an exceeding and everlasting Weight of Glory. The first Impediment we *ourselves*, by the Grace of God, must remove, by correcting each habitually bad Disposition, and bent of Inclination. The second our Blessed Saviour removed, by the Sacrifice of himself, made it consistent with the Good of the Whole, to bestow Happiness upon us, and gave the divine Benevolence full Scope to exert itself.

Though nothing that another Person does, can make us more personally *valuable*, yet the common Course of Things every Day proves, that, what another Person does, may avert *Misery* from us, or procure *Happiness* to us. If there is any Thing wrong in such a Procedure, then the whole Course of Nature is manifestly

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so: It being necessary in the ordinary Course of Nature, which is no less God's Appointment than his supernatural and extraordinary Dispensations; that one Man should be rescued from Ruin, or advanced to Happiness, by the Interposition of another*.

And the Arguments, which are brought to disprove *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, conclude with equal Strength (that is, with no Strength at all) against the Charity of our fellow Creatures. The Laws of Nature, as well as the Oeconomy of our Redemption, point out to us, that, though no Man can with Justice be *esteemed* for what another Agent does; yet One may be made *more happy*, or less miserable, by the Means of Another.

The Author of the Book of *Job* seems to have had no Notion of founding the Favour of God to us, merely upon his Approbation of us, when he says, *God chargeth his Angels with Folly: The Stars are not pure in his Sight: How much less Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is a Worm?*

Created Beings, that are absolutely good, God must absolutely approve; Beings, that

* See Bishop Butler's Analogy.

are absolutely bad, he must absolutely dis-approve. But between absolute Perfection, and absolute Depravity, there are so many intermediate Degrees of Goodness, and it's opposite Quality, of Amiability and Unamiableness; and these often so complicated and blended together in the same Subject; that no one can be assured, how the Scale would preponderate, or where the Over-balance would be, in the Judgment of that Being, *who sees not as Man sees*. Nay, the more amiable any Man was in the Sight of God, the more liable he would be, upon this Scheme, to Despondency, not to say, Despair. For certainly, if any Thing can make such Beings as we are, amiable in the Sight of God, it must be a modest Opinion of ourselves, and a just Sense of our own Unworthiness. But the more modest Opinion a Man entertains of himself; the more diffident he will be of his own Righteousness, and the Divine Approbation.

So true it is, that whoever has deviated from Scripture, has left us, upon the Foot of the Account, in a worse State than he found us.

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For what is this intrinsic Valuableness, on which some lay so great Stress? Are we not like those Things, which, to be greatly admired, must not be thoroughly understood? It is *Ignorance*, which is the *Mother* of *Admiration* of our *fellow Creatures*: True *Knowledge* is the *Mother* of sound and *substantial Devotion*. For the more we know of *Men*, the *less* we shall be apt to *admire* them. But our *Admiration* and *Adoration* of *God*, rises higher, in *Proportion* to the *Knowledge* we have gained of his *Nature* and *Works*. There are few, but who would rather depart out of the *World*, than have their foolish, vain, and wicked *Thoughts*, and whatever was transacted behind the *Scene*, within their own *Breasts*, disclosed, without *Reserve*, to the *View* of the whole *World*. *Nature* is very often rebelling against *Principle*, and sometimes getting the better of it. The *Passions* hasty and impetuous, unless we have an habitual *Guard* upon ourselves, hurry us into *Action*, and plunge us into *Folly*; before *Reason*, a slow sedentary *Principle*, puts in it's *Remonstrances*. And what is the *Consequence*? That very *Reason*, which either continued in a *State* of *Inaction*, or

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poorly and abjectly complied with their Demands, acts the Part of an after-wise Friend, who, though he does not restrain us from doing wrong, yet, as soon as the Action is done, upbraids us with pungent Reflexions, and tells us (*sad Truth!*) that *we were Fools.*

When we consider the Number, Malignity, and particular Aggravations of our Sins, a *modest* ingenuous Man will be sensible he *wants* a Redeemer; and the *Presumptuous* betrays his Want of one, even by his *being* so. We have Vanities enow, and too many; but let us not *add* to the Catalogue of them, this *one* Vanity, more gross and flagrant than all the Rest, *viz.* to imagine, that our *finite imperfect* Services can, of themselves, insure to us, what is of *infinite Value, perfect, endless, and unalterable Happiness.*

He, who *thinks* he has Worth enough to secure a Title to absolute Pardon, and a Fulness of Bliss, *proves* by the very *Thought* that he has too little. For we then give the best Proofs of our Worthiness; when we have a deep Sense, and make an humble Confession of our own Unworthiness. Human Nature, conscious of it's numerous

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Frailties, shrinks back at the Thoughts of an Interview with it's Creator ; and Nothing can disarm Death of it's Terrors, but that Religion, which has made us the most gracious Overtures ; and in which the awful *Majesty* of the *Judge* is qualified by the lovely *Mercies* of the *Saviour*. None of us can merit : And after All we can do, (though none of us do all we can) we are but *unprofitable Servants* : But he makes the *nearest* Approaches to *Merit*, who, after his sincere Endeavours to please his Maker, humbly *disclaims* all *Merit*, but —the all-sufficient *Merits* of his blessed *Saviour*.

If any Doubt remain with any one, whether the divine Approbation, and the divine Favour, are equivalent and synonymous Terms ; let him, to put the Matter past Dispute, reflect, what a Difference there is between these two Petitions : God, *approve* of me, a Sinner : And, God, be *favourable* or *merciful* to me, a Sinner. The former is highly ridiculous and absurd. For it is impossible, that God should *approve* Sinners, as such ; and the best of us are but *penitent* Sinners : But it is not impossible, that he may be *merciful* and *benevolent*.

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benevolent to Those, whom he cannot approve, as far as they are Sinners : (For otherwise, he would never have commanded us to hate and disapprove the Sin, but yet to regard the Sinner with a Love of *Benevolence*.) Which Benevolence of the Deity may exert itself, in Acts of solid and substantial Favour, when our Saviour's Satisfaction made it no ways interfere with the Ends of his Government, and the general Good.

In short, we must *so far*, or in such a low Degree, approve ourselves to God, as to be deemed by him, Subjects not incapable of, or disqualified for, everlasting Happiness. But when that is done ; it is through Christ alone, that the Weakness of our Endeavours must be *pardoned*, and the *Sincerity* of them *accepted*.

Which brings me, secondly, to distinguish between a *Capacity* for a Thing, and a *Title* to a Thing. Nothing, but what *internally* alters the Sinner, can make him a Subject *capable* of God's Favour hereafter. A *Capacity* for everlasting Happiness, must be partly founded on our own *good Habits* and Dispositions ; since heavenly Pleasures cannot suit a Soul, that is

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deeply and habitually immersed in Vice, But the Title to Happiness must be founded on something *extrinsic*. We have said, that we shall be *equal to the Angels* hereafter. Now, though Man had never sinned, he had no more Ground to expect, that he should be as the Angels of God hereafter; than he has Reason to complain, that he is not an Angel at present: Much less, when Man had sinned, when he was become an *obnoxious* Creature, could Reason support such extravagant Pretensions.

Though therefore our Saviour's Sufferings, as not internally altering the Sinner, could not give him a Capacity or Relish for Happiness; yet, they might give him what he wanted, when a Subject capable, a Title to eternal Bliss. Repentance must remove the *disqualifying* Circumstances, those Circumstances, that are a Bar to endless Felicity. But, when the disqualifying Circumstances are removed, then eternal Life is the Gift of God, through Jesus Christ. Repentance in itself, considered *intrinsically*, cannot be so acceptable to God as *unsinning* Obedience: And therefore it wanted something *extrinsic*, to make it so:

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Our Saviour performed that unfinning Obedience, and it was placed to our Account.

But this brings me to the second Scheme, which I promised to confute, the Efficacy of mere Repentance, without any Atonement.

And here a great many Questions may be asked, which the Light of Nature cannot determine, *viz.* Whether Repentance will atone only for *less* Crimes; or also for *notorious* Sins, long persisted in? If for the latter, Whether it will be so far available as to procure a *total* Exemption from Punishment; or only to *soften* the *Rigour* of the Penalty? If it avails so far, which can never be proved; Whether it could likewise entitle to any *Happiness*? And what that *Happiness* would be? Whether an *unmixed eternal* Happiness; or only a Happiness of a *short* Duration?

It were to be wished, that those who are so restless in their Endeavours to destroy Christianity, would let it alone, till they could propose, in lieu of it, some satisfactory Scheme for a wise Man to live and die by; some tolerable Hypothesis to support us under the Calamities of Life, and the Pangs of Death, so well calculated

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for our Comfort in this World, and our Happiness in the next. But the Misfortune is, they *forsake the Fountain of living Waters, and hew out broken Cisterns, which will hold no Water.* An authentic Promise of eternal Life, from him *who keepeth his Promise for ever*, is of infinitely more Value; than all the dry and jejune Speculations of Reason, abstractedly from Revelation.

Will Repentance alone recover that Happiness, which Mankind had forfeited; and rescue them from that Misery, to which they were become obnoxious? Do we not find, in the ordinary Course of Nature, which is God's Appointment, that Punishments, which no After-Conduct, no subsequent Reformation, can entirely remove, often attend upon Guilt *. A Man, for Instance, shall feel the ill Effects of Debauchery, and a profligate Course of Life, long after he has repented and been reclaimed. Now, if we thus suffer for our Sins, notwithstanding our Repentance, in the daily Course of God's natural Providence, and his stated and uniform Methods

* See Bishop Butler's Analogy.

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of acting towards his Creatures *here*; What Grounds have we to imagine, that Repentance alone, without the Merits of our Saviour, will free us from all the ill Consequences of Sin, in God's religious and moral Settlement of Things hereafter, in his final Adjustment of Rewards and Punishments?

That God will put the *repenting* Sinner upon a better Foot, than the *veteran unrelenting* Criminal, is indeed an evident Conclusion of *Reason*: But then it is as evident an one, that he will not put him upon the *same* Foot with the *Angels*, that *need no Repentance*.

For to put *Offenders*, without an Atone-ment, upon a Foot of *Equality* with the *Guiltless* and *Unoffending*, would be to make no Distinction, where there was a very material Difference.

Here then are three Sorts of Beings in the Creation.—Beings, that *need no Repentance*.—*Penitent* Sinners.—*Impenitent* Sinners. It will be allowed, that God may consign the *last* to a State of *pure Misery*, and the *first* to a State of *pure Happiness*; and all the Difficulty will be, what God will do with the MIDDLE Set of Creatures,
viz.

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viz. penitent Sinners. To make them as happy as the first, would be as inconsistent with our Notions of Justice, as to make them as miserable as the last. Here Reason seems to be either intirely at a Stand; or, if it can prove any Thing, only to prove this; that Beings in whom there is a Mixture of moral Good and Evil, shall be consigned to some State, in which there shall be a proportionable Mixture of natural Good and Evil.

Some late Authors, however, have been hardy enough to assert, the Efficacy of mere Repentance; and, to support their Assertions, have argued after the following Manner, *viz.* Men, by a thorough Reformation, cease to be personally displeasing, and become personally pleasing to God, and, consequently, do not need any Thing that is personally pleasing in another to make them so.

The Author seems to be describing some visionary ideal Beings, which may exist, perhaps, in his Imagination; but are in Fact no where to be found in this World. For what is this Reformation, which removes whatever is displeasing? Why an absolutely perfect Repentance, which can

have no Place in such imperfect Beings as we are. It is a mere *Notion*, not a *Reality*. Is our Repentance a Return to an *intire uninterrupted* Obedience, without any Alloy or Tincture of Vice? Or is it only to *such* an Obedience, as is attended with several *Relapses*, but by which, by Degrees, and in the Main, we gain *Ground* over our Vices: And, though far, very far, from being perfect, yet are in a progressive State towards Perfection?

But granting, there could be such an absolutely perfect Reformation; granting farther, what can never be proved, that such a Reformation would remove God's Displeasure: Yet does the Deity punish as frail and passionate Men do, merely because he is *displeased* with, or disapproves of, the Agent, without answering any beneficial and salutary Ends whatever? All *Displeasure apart*, Governors, who consult the Good of the Whole, may, and often do, inflict Punishments, to discountenance Vice, and support the Cause of Virtue and Goodness. And he alone, who sees past, present, and future, in one united Point of View, whose Foreknowledge looks through every possible Consequence, that
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can result from every Manner of acting towards penitent Sinners; can himself alone know, and reveal to us, how he will deal with penitent Sinners, so as not to *counter-act* the universal Good.

It is farther urged, that the Deity must consider us as Beings not only liable, but also likely, to commit Sin; born with strong Propensions to Vice, and surrounded with numerous Temptations. And when we have done all that can be reasonably expected from such frail Creatures as we are, (that is, when we have done our Best) then we are the proper Objects of God's Favour, without any Need of an Atonement, or propitiatory Sacrifice.

Here again, as usual, the Authors consider Mankind in Theory, and not in Fact: They consider them, as what they *should* and *ought* to be, serving God to the utmost *Stretch* of their limited Powers, with the collected and united Force of every Faculty; and not as what they *really* are, often wilfully doing, what they ought not; and oftener omitting what they ought to do.

Whatever Allowances we may suppose a gracious God will make, for the Frailties of our Nature; yet the *original* Weaknesses

nesses which we bring with us into the World, are, in Process of Time, so blended with our *acquired* Follies and Wrongnesses; that it being impossible to distinguish, in all Cases, the one from the other, we cannot draw much solid Comfort from thence. Whatever we *are* at *present*, no Body can tell what we *might have been*; if from first to last we had taken all possible Care, to weed out each rising Folly, and to cherish the Growth of every Virtue: Even in those Sins which are called Sins of *Frailty*, and are, in some Measure, such; there is generally such a Degree of *Wilfulness*, that, in some Cases, it is no easy Matter to ascertain, which is the predominant Ingredient in the Composition. A *superficial* Inquirer may, no Doubt, be highly pleased with himself. But the more *thoroughly* any Man examines himself, the more a Man considers how seldom, if ever, he fully acts up to those Principles which he entertains, generally falling short of them, and sometimes acting contrary to them; the more he would be dissatisfied with himself.

Is there a Man, who can lay his Hand upon his Heart, after having faithfully examined it, and declare, that whatever
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Frailties he may have, yet he has strove to the best of his Power, in every Stage of Life, to subdue each inordinate Passion, to discharge every Duty, and to cultivate each virtuous Habit? Let him stand forth at the last decisive Day, and put in his Claim, (for an equitable Claim he perhaps may have) to such a *Degree* of Happiness, as will preponderate, or be superior to any *short-lived Misery*, which he may have endured here, and be proportioned to his Deserts. But *even he* could have no well-grounded Reason to expect, unless the Merits of our Saviour had enforced it to him, a Happiness *unallayed* in it's Nature, exceeding in it's *Degree*, whatever he could have imagined, and everlasting in it's *Duration*.

After all, such a Being, as is described before, is, I am afraid, merely visionary: Men of the most distinguished Piety having Reason to pray, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, O Lord, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified.*

Several indeed are too apt, in the *Pride* and *Bloom* of Life, to flatter themselves into groundless *Presumptions*, and a *sanguine* Confidence. But when they come, just upon

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upon the Verge of another World, *coolly*, and calmly to adjust Accounts between their Maker and themselves; I doubt those Sins, which, like *Shadows*, looked so *little* at the *Noon* of Life, will greatly *lengthen* with their *setting* Sun. Be that as it will, it is certain, that the Observation, *viz.* that none ever pushed their Capacity, in Matters of Knowledge, as far as it was able to extend; holds as true in Matters of Morality: None ever exerted their Abilities as far as they were able to carry them, to the utmost Extent of their Capacity in the Pursuit and Practice of Virtue.

And yet *natural* Religion may require not only the *Being* and *Reality* of each Virtue; but the utmost *Degree* of Virtue in our Power under the Penalty of future Punishment. Because every Thing which we *have*, being derived *from* God; every Thing which we can *do*, is but our bounden Tribute *to* Him. Christianity, on the other Hand, requires indeed the Being and *Reality* of Virtue, under the Penalty of *Damnation*. But it requires the *utmost Degree*, and the highest Attainments, in Virtue, only under the Penalty of an *Abatement* or *Discount* of Happiness. He that

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has sowed sparingly; according to that gracious Dispensation, shall reap proportionably, though in a less Degree than he, that has sowed bountifully. He, that has cultivated virtuous Habits, though in a lower Measure, shall be happy, though not equally with him, who has made much nearer Approaches to the Standard of Perfection.

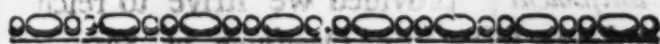
So much Reason have we to be thankful to him, who has rescued us from the *Punishment*; provided we strive to rescue ourselves from the *Dominion* of Sin; in Confidence of whose all-sufficient Merits, we may securely launch out into the *Depths* of Eternity, as St. *Peter* ventured to *walk upon the Sea*, while we have a *Saviour* to lend an helping Hand, and to *support us*, as he did *him*, from sinking into the deep Abyſs below.

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SERMON VI.

Preached at the
Lady *MORER*'s LECTURE.

On the REDEMPTION.



I PETER III. 18.

*Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the
Just for the Unjust, that he might bring
us unto God.*

HAVING, in a former Discourse, SERMON VI.
shewn the Weakness and Insuffi-
ciency of those Schemes, which
have been set up in Opposition to Scrip-
ture; I now proceed to my

II^d general Head, to establish and con-
firm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Sa-
tisfaction. After which

B b 2

I shall

I shall in the last Place, consider the
Extent of the Redemption.

Iſt, I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh and confirm the true Scripture Doctrine of the Satisfaction.

And this I ſhall do,—by enquiring what Neceſſity there was for a Satisfaction— by ſhewing—that our Saviour was the only proper Perſon to ſatisfy for our Sins, as he only could merit Forgiveness for them—that his Merits might be imputed to us—and our *Iniquities born by him*; — and by removing Objections.

That there was a Neceſſity for a Satisfaction; appears very ſtrongly from Scripture Evidence, the only Evidence, which perhaps we are capable of, in Matters of ſo high a Nature. For unleſs there had been an abſolute Neceſſity, unleſs there had been a Knot too hard for any but the Deity to untie; a God indeed, *who was the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*, would not have deſcended upon the Scene of this World, to unravel the perplexing Difficulty. Certainly a Being of infinite Benevolence, would not have expoſed his
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only Son, *in whom he was well pleased*, to needlessly, as well as undeserved Misery.

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Again: It is said, it is *impossible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats*, which have no *inherent Worth and Efficacy*, should take away Sin, or the Penalty of Sin: Therefore it was necessary, that a Person of inconceivable Dignity, and superior Excellency, should satisfy the Demands of Justice, and procure for us the Endearments of divine Mercy. *Him hath God set forth to be a Propitiation for Sin, to declare his Righteousness*, or to display his Justice, *for the Remission of Sins that are past; that he might be just, and the justifier of them, that believe in Jesus Christ.*

To reject a Satisfaction thus strongly proved from Scripture, merely because we do not perceive the absolute Fitness and Necessity of it, by any Evidence from the *Nature* of the Thing; is intirely to set aside the *Divine Authority*. For a Regard to the divine Authority, can only be shewn by assenting to Propositions *inevident in themselves*, as having his Sanction, or being revealed by him. To Propositions *evident in themselves* we should have assented, whether revealed by him or not; nay, if they

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had been discovered to us by the most abandoned Sinner, or notorious Liar. It is astonishing therefore to find Persons asserting, in express Words, that it is not the Declaration of God but the Fitness of the Thing declared, which is the proper Ground of our Assent, i. e. they will not believe the Deity affirming a Proposition, unless they have such a clear and distinct Perception, of the Fitness of the Thing affirmed; as must induce their Belief, whether the Deity had affirmed it, or no. Modest Men will be inclined to think, that all the Declarations of an infinitely wise Being imply a Fitness; a Fitness in the Nature of the Thing, but unperceived by us, whose Ideas do not reach the whole Compass and Extent of Fitnesses and Unfitnesses. A Man of superior Sense may discover a Fitness, that escaped the Observation of one of less Penetration: An Angel may discern Fitness, which escapes a Man of the highest Reach of Thought! And the Deity must perceive Infinity of Fitnesses, which are undiscoverable by the most exalted Archangel. And here I would observe, once for All, that most of the Objections which I have met with against Scripture,

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Scripture, proceed from hence; that Men set up for *Free-Thinkers*, in Cases where they can be but *Half-Thinkers*, or even less than that. Particularly in this Case, we, who see but some scattered Links of the universal Chain, some disjointed Parts of the whole united System, cannot perceive, what is best and most fitting for the Good of the Whole; and therefore ought to acquiesce in *his* Declaration, who certainly *does*. Our Conclusion is but the Sum total of our Reasoning; and as a Sum can never be justly cast up, when any one Particular is omitted: So neither can the Sum total of our Reasoning be just and exact, when any one intermediate Idea, which ought to be taken into the Account, is dropped or wanting. What may seem to us to have no Fitness, who view only some detached Branches of God's universal Kingdom; might appear very reasonable, could we see through the whole Contexture of Things. Just as some loose disjointed Passages from Scripture, appear odd and unpromising by themselves; and yet are very beautiful, and pertinent; the Thread, Connexion, and Dependency of one Thing on another, being considered.

B b 4

Nothing

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Nothing can match the Ignorance and *Insufficiency* of those Persons, except it be their great *Self-Sufficiency*, who vainly imagine, they have Compass of Thought enough, to grasp all that is necessary to a clear and determinate Resolution of the Point in Debate. I have often thought, in how ridiculous a Light we must appear, to intelligent Beings of a superior Rank, while we are thus meddling, with Matters that are too high for us. A Set of Children, who should form Schemes to govern *Europe*, to adjust the interfering Interests of contending Princes, and to direct their Sovereign in complicated Cases, upon the most critical Emergencies; could not appear more absurd to the ablest Statesman, than we must do to them, when we sit in Judgment upon God's Dispensations, scan the whole Plan of his Providence, and determine, what his infinite Wisdom ought to do. No, Let Angels and Archangels desire to *look into*, and *contemplate*, the *Nature* of our Redemption: Let Man be humbly content to *enjoy* the *Benefits* of it. When God shall unfold the whole Scheme of his Administration; when he shall lay, before the whole System of intelligent Beings,

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ings, the Harmony, Uniformity, and Consistency of his Providence, from first to last; then we may expect greater Light into these Affairs. In the mean Time, it is enough for us to know; that *Scripture* proves, and Reason cannot *disprove*, the Necessity of a Satisfaction.

2dly, Our Saviour was the only proper Person to satisfy for our Sins, as he alone could merit the Forgiveness of them.—

Now *no created* Being could merit. Because the higher Excellencies any Creature is ennobled with, the more he is indebted to the Giver of them; and his Services must be disproportioned to the Favours he has received. For such a Being to think, that any Thing *he* could do, could merit Forgiveness, and everlasting Happiness, for a World of Sinners, must have been the highest Presumption, if God had *not* appointed him: But, if God *had* appointed him, it was so far from *Merit*, that it was his bounden *Duty*, in Return for the many unmerited Graces, which he had received.

—Our Saviour, who was *God* as well as *Man*, might merit. He could, out of his own *Fund*, discharge our *Debts*, or buy

us

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us with a Price.—He had something of his own to merit withal, which no mere Creature could have. He had Power to take up his Life, and he had Power to lay it down.

And though his Sufferings were the Sufferings of the Man; yet the offering up of his human Nature, was the Offering of the God, of the second Person in the blessed Trinity. For as it is said, *We are redeemed, not with corruptible Things, but with the precious Blood of Christ*: So it is said, that he by the eternal Spirit; or, as it might be rendered, by his eternal Spirit, offered himself up without Spot to God. And in several other Passages, the Merit of his Sufferings is resolved into the Dignity of that Nature, which stamped a Value upon them. *Who being the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, purged, or expiated, our Sins. In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins: Who is the Image of the invisible God, &c. Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* And, though the God-head was impassive; yet the Person, who

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who was God as well as Man, might suffer: SERMON VI.
Just as, though the Soul is unperishable;
yet Man, who is compounded of Soul and
Body, is mortal.

Now, for the second Person of the Trinity to offer up, what was *his own* independently, what was closely allied and *endeared* to him, by a *personal Union*, what derived a distinguished Lustre from him; to offer it up *unconstrained*; must either constitute Merit; or we do not know what does.

As one Being enriched with Knowledge, and ennobled with Virtue, is far more valuable, than the whole Mass of dead and insensate Matter: Thus one perfect Model of Virtue, without any Alloy of Vice, thus offered up by *God blessed for evermore*, was of more Worth, than the whole World of sinful Beings. And, whatever was deficient in the human Sacrifice, considered abstractedly, and merely as human, might be supplied by the Merits of the infinite Offerer superadded to it, and placed to our Account. What those Merits particularly were, we need not curiously inquire. A Man may know the Matter of Fact, that he is ransomed from Captivity and Slavery
by

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by a gracious Sovereign, without understanding *particularly, explicitly, and fully, the Kind, Manner, and Value of the Ransom, that was laid down, and the Price, with which he was purchased.*

It is enough we are informed, that a *Divine* Person interested himself in the Affair: And when a Divine Person interposed, what he, an *infinite* Being, has done for us, cannot, in the Nature of Things, be *wholly, and adequately comprehended* by us: But what *we* have to do, in Consequence of his Transactions, for ourselves, must be *clear and level* to our Capacities.

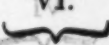
Thus God was in Christ, reconciling the World to himself.

Having shewn, that there was a Necessity some Being should merit for us, and that our Saviour was the only Being that could merit; I now proceed to shew, in what Sense his Merits could be imputed to us, and our Iniquities laid upon him.

And it must be owned, that our Saviour's *good Actions* cannot be properly and strictly *ours*; nor *our bad Actions* his: And in this Sense, personal Merit and Demerit cannot be transferred. But the *Reward* of
his

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his good Actions, (I shall consider the SERMON VI. *Punishment* of our Sins by and by,) may, 

notwithstanding, be made over to us, or conferred upon us. To exemplify this by a familiar Instance: A Person does his Country some eminent and signal Service, for which the most advantageous Posts, and distinguishing Marks of Honour, are offered him: He declines them, as to his own Person; but desires they may be bestowed upon such as have been faithful to him, and are qualified for them; and he shall look upon it as if done to himself.

Is there any Thing absurd or ridiculous in such a Conduct? Why might not then our blessed Saviour confer the Rewards of his meritorious Sufferings and Actions, as we may dispense our Favours, on whom he thought proper? Why might he not do, what he would with his own, and place them to our Account; provided he did not *misplace* them, upon unsuitable Objects, or prostitute them to Beings habitually immoral?

Whatever Privileges our Saviour acquired, by that inimitable Original of Love and voluntary Condescension, were his: And what were *his*, he might *dispose of* as
his :

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his. For to dispose of them as his, was only to use them as his. *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me; that they may behold my Glory.* Here we must attend to the Distinction between Approbation, and Kindness. The Approbation of an Action cannot be transferred, with Justice, from the Agent to another Person; yet the Kindness consequent to that Approbation, may, and often is, with the Consent of the meritorious Person, thus transferred; because, in being kind to others at his Instance and Request, we are, in the last Resort, kind to himself; We reward him in others.

Thus by the Obedience of one many became Righteous. And he, who knew no Sin, was made Sin, or an Expiation for Sin, that we might be the Righteousness of God in him. Thus he was the Lord, our Righteousness. And we became the Heirs of God, for his Sake, and upon his Account, who had no Pretensions to such exalted Privileges upon our own.

So much may serve to prove, in what Sense our Saviour's Merits were imputed to us. I now proceed to shew, in what Sense he could be said to bear our Iniquities.

ties. And here it must be granted, that *personal Guilt* cannot be transferred; but the *legal Guilt* may, that is, the Obligation to Punishment, which results from the Violation of the Law. For God does not punish merely for Punishing's Sake: He does not inflict *useless* Misery upon his Creatures; He does not punish *merely* because he *disapproves* of, or is displeased with, Guilt; but because of the *ill Consequences* which would follow, if he suffered Guilt to go unpunished: Because it is necessary to vindicate the Honour of his Government, to support his Authority as supreme Lawgiver, and to secure the Respect due to his Laws. Now if the Reverence due to God's Laws could be maintained, and all the wise and good Ends of Punishment answered, by the Substitution of another Person (equal to the mighty Province) in the Room of the Offender; then the Deity might accept of a Commutation, remit the Punishment to the Offender, and transfer it upon his Substitute. For when the *Reasons* of inflicting a Penalty are taken off, there the *Penalty* itself undoubtedly may be taken off. The only Thing then that remains, is to prove, that

our Saviour's Sufferings were sufficient, to secure the Honour and Respect due to God's Laws. Now, whatever has a Tendency to impress upon our Mind, a most awful Sense of God's Aversion to Sin, has a Tendency to preserve a Reverence for God's Laws. And Nothing could have imprinted upon our Minds, a more awful Sense of God's Aversion to Sin, than that he would not forgive it, notwithstanding our Repentance, upon less difficult Terms, than the Son of God's giving himself a Ransom for this World: That he would not pardon the Breach of his Laws, without our Saviour's offering up what he had as great a Value for, as he had a Hatred and Detestation of the Offences committed against his Law.

We know not how far the State of this World might affect other intelligent Beings, in some other Part of the Creation, how far it might countenance a Rebellion and give them disadvantageous Ideas of their supreme Lawgiver; if a whole World of penitent Offenders, how long, how often, or how greatly soever, they have sinned, might be admitted to everlasting Glory, without any Sufferings personal or vicarious.

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vicarious. They might imagine, that, what could be so easily pardoned, was not very offensive to their Creator, nor would be destructive to themselves. To obviate these ill Impressions, the Deity shewed he so hated Sin, *that he gave his only begotten Son*, rather than not *condemn Sin in the Flesh*: He shewed, that when Man had sinned, nothing that mere Man could do, was of Worth and Efficacy enough, to reinstate him in his Favour. He laid a Plan of the Redemption so amazing, that Creatures of a Nature not so frail as ours, could have no Grounds to expect the like Favour, in Case they revolted from their Allegiance to him; and so sufficient, as to leave no Room, for material Exceptions against it, to those enlightened Beings, who may see farther, than the mere Shell and Surface of it.

From what has been laid down, the Weakness of the following Objection discovers itself, *viz. that Sin cannot be punished abstractedly from the Sinner: Because Sin abstractedly from the Sinner, is a mere abstract Notion.* For the supreme Legislator does not punish the Sinner for his Sins, merely as such *abstractedly* from the

ill Consequences, which would arise from the *Impunity* of Sin. The formal Reason of Punishment is, the *evil Tendency* which Sin must have, if unpunished. For, *all evil Tendency apart*, to punish would be to make the Being punished miserable, without a sufficient Cause: Now, though Sin, as something personal, *cannot be removed* from the Sinner; yet the *ill Consequences* of Sin unpunished *may be removed*, by a valuable Consideration, fitted to obtain every End, which could be proposed from his personal Punishment, and offered and accepted in lieu of it. When there is *no Reason for* putting a Creature to Pain, when no desirable End or Advantage can be compassed by it; there is always a Reason against doing it, *viz.* that it is a Pain, *unnecessary* Pain. Some Writers, however, have asserted, that, notwithstanding all the Ends of Government could be answered, and the general Happiness secured, by the Interposition of another Person; yet such a Procedure would be contrary to the *Truth and Right of the Case*. But what Truth would be violated? Not certainly *moral* Truth. For a Truth, which has *no Reference to Happiness*, must be a

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Matter of *Indifference* ; it must be a *speculative* unconcerning Truth, and therefore not a *moral* Truth. If an Action, which was neither designed for, nor is productive of, *Benefit* or *Harm*, be, as it undoubtedly is, an *indifferent* Action ; an Action which, in the Whole of it's Effects, increases Happiness and lessens Misery, must be *morally good*, in Proportion to the Moment of Good, which it produces ; and therefore such a Procedure, as was calculated for the general Good, without any Injury done, as I shall prove immediately, to the mediating Party, must be morally good.

It may be objected, that in the Subject, in which the Fault is, in that same Subject should the Punishment be ; and that it is a flagrant Injustice, to punish an innocent Person instead of the Guilty.

And, it is granted, that it is Injustice to punish a Person, merely *because* he is innocent : But it is not so, *notwithstanding* he is innocent, when he *willingly* and *deliberately* *chuses* to undergo the Punishment ; when he has an uncontested *Right* to dispose of himself, and when *great* and *important* *Ends* are answered by it. There

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can be *no Injustice*, where there is no *Invasion* of any *Property*; and there could be no *Invasion* of any *Property*; when our Saviour, by a *free, generous, unrestrained* Act resigned, what he had an undisputed Right to lay down, his own Life. Nor was it any Impeachment of God's Goodness to let an Evil of *Suffering* take Place, an Evil, which was productive of an *universal prepollent* Good. It could be no Injury to our Saviour, for another Reason, *viz.* that he received an ample Recompence for the Hardships, which he sustained in his human Nature, by distinguished Rewards, and an Accession of Glory to it. The Arguments, which are brought to prove, that he, who was no Sinner, ought not to have been a Sufferer *for us*, prove as strongly, at least, that he ought to have been *no Sufferer at all*. For he no more deserved those Sufferings on *his own* Account, than he did on *ours*. And yet we see innocent Persons; Children, for Instance, who are capable of no actual Guilt, suffer daily. And if they may suffer for *no* assignable *End*, which we can comprehend; Why might not our Saviour suffer for so *valuable an End*, as to avert Misery from,

and procure an endless Felicity for, all penitent Sinners? Nor is it any more an Absurdity, that God should permit a guiltless Person, to part with that, which he has a Right to dispose of, to save a whole World from Ruin; than that he should command an innocent Person, to give away some Part of his Possessions and Property, to rescue a Family that has involved itself, from Ruin. In both Cases the *Innocent* suffer for the *Guilty*; and part with what is dear and valuable to them, to promote, what is more dear and valuable; the Good of their fellow Creatures. Had Men as full a Power lodged in them, to dispose of their Lives, as they have, confessedly, of their Money, for the Benefit of Mankind; such Acts would indeed be Injustice, when *imposed* upon them: But, when they proceeded from their own *Choice* and free Consent, they would be Instances of heroic Goodness.

It has been represented as a strange Expedient, to deter Beings from Sin, or to shew Displeasure against it; that an innocent Person should suffer instead of the Sinner: To insist upon this, we are told, is obstinately to persist in Error, without

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the least Face of an Argument. To which I answer : That there is an Obstinacy in Error some where or other : But where it lyes, will appear, by and by, by laying open the Chicanery of this Objection : Which is as follows. The Objectors consider our Saviour *abstractedly*, as to his own Nature ; without considering him in his *relative* Capacity, as to the Office he undertook. Whatever Right he had to be treated as an innocent Person, *antecedently* to his offering himself as a Ransom ; yet, *when* he had offered himself as a Substitute, he voluntarily waved and relinquished that Right : And therefore might be treated, not according to that Right which he had foregone, or made a Cession of ; but according to the Capacity which he had assumed. Now to apply what is here laid down, in Order to unravel this Piece of Sophistry : They very artfully drop the *Idea* of *Substitute*, retaining only that of an *innocent* Person : They take into the Account his *Nature*, omitting his *Office* : And thus, suppressing a *material Part* of the Truth, they confound unattentive Readers, (which the Bulk of Readers ever will be) with this specious Fallacy, *viz.* To punish an innocent

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cent Person, as our Saviour was, instead of the Guilty, is so far from being a Testimony of Displeasure against Sin; that it is the Reverse. And it would be so, to punish him *merely as such*, in that *single abstract View*, without any *Relation* to the *Character* which he sustained: But to punish him as one who gave up his Right to be treated as innocent; who voluntarily offered himself, as a Substitute for an offending World, is certainly an Indication of the divine Displeasure against Sin: Because, *unless* God had been so far displeased at Sin, as not to readmit even penitent Sinners, *merely as such*, to Favour; he had required *no Substitute*, no vicarious Punishment at all. God's Aversion to Sin, upon the Account of it's Malignity and prejudicial Nature, is shewn, in Proportion to the Difficulty of pardoning it; and the Difficulty of pardoning it, in Proportion to the Dignity of the Person, who suffered.

It is objected, that such a Satisfaction must be inconsistent with God's free Grace: Because, if it was a just and reasonable Satisfaction; God could not have refused it: But if not just and reasonable; then he ought not to have accepted it.

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To which I answer, that this is a gross and palpable Fallacy: It *supposes* the very Thing, which ought to have been *proved*, or rather, admits of *no Proof*.

It supposes, that a Satisfaction may be just and reasonable, *antecedently* to the Will of the Legislator: Whereas, in all vicarious Punishments, the Legislator's Consent must be *presupposed*, as absolutely necessary to make them just and reasonable: Which Consent he may withhold; and insist, that, the Crime being ours, the Punishment should be so too.

Besides, when it is said, that the *Satisfaction* was *reasonable*, it may be asked, Reasonable, as to *what*? It was reasonable in *this* Respect, that it was an Expedient to secure the Honour of God's Laws, and to prevent the ill Consequences of the Indemnity of Sin, though repented of: But it might have been *as* reasonable, at least, and would have answered the same End, if Sinners had suffered in *Person*. Therefore this Objection proceeds, *a dicto secundum quid, ad dictum simpliciter*, from what is reasonable in *one* View, to what is so *intirely*, and in *all* Views, without any possible Alternative, which might be *as* reasonable.

If

If it be objected, that the second Person in the Trinity could not satisfy the first: Because they are of one undivided Essence.

I reply, That the whole Force of this Objection, rests upon our Notions of the Divine Unity, which are too inadequate to reason solidly upon. Those, who advance this Objection, should prove, either that the Union must be too close to admit of distinct Actions and Offices; or too wide to make the three Persons one God. The Manner of the divine Unity is as unsearchable, as his Essence; and our Ideas of it too indeterminate and indistinct, to beget any full and determinate Knowledge, which must always keep Pace with our Ideas. The three Persons are one, because *undivided*: But it does not follow, that because they are undivided; that therefore they are *indistinct*: To be undivided, and to be indistinct, being not the same Idea. *Whither shall I go, says the Psalmist, from thy Presence? If I go up into Heaven, thou art there: If I go down to Hell, thou art there also: If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there also shall thy Hand lead*

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lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.
 Now Being in Heaven, Being in Hell, Being in the Sea, may be one Being, because undivided; but not, because undistinct: For certainly Being in Heaven is distinct from Being in Hell. The Unity then of the three Persons results from their Indivisibility.——Indivisibility is no Bar to Distinction.——What is no Bar, to Distinction, can be none to distinct Actions or Offices.——Consequently, Son and Father, though indivisible, and therefore one, might act distinctly, in giving and receiving Satisfaction.

Still it may be urged; that this does not intirely remove the Difficulty: That, however distinct, they are one and the same Lawgiver: And consequently, the same Lawgiver satisfied the same Lawgiver: Which is an Absurdity.

To take off the Force of this Objection, it is sufficient to observe: That to be sovereign Lawgiver is no *essential* Perfection of the Deity. If it were, he could never have been without it: He must have been Lawgiver *ab aeterno*: i. e. He must have been Lawgiver, before there were any Beings to give Laws to. It is plain then,

then, to be Lawgiver is only a *relative* Property. Our Saviour consequently might be truly God, *i. e.* ennobled with all the *essential* Perfections of God; at the same Time that he divested himself of the *relative* Capacity of sovereign Lawgiver, during the Time, that he was transacting the gracious Scheme of our Redemption. It is true, it is necessary, that God should be Lawgiver to us, *stante rerum Hypothesi*: But then, upon the Supposition of more Persons in the Divine Nature, it is no more necessary, that the Son should be always supreme *Lawgiver*; than that the Father should be *Judge* at the last Day. The same Attributes are *inherently* vested in both: But the *Exertion* of those Attributes, in *this* or *that* Province, in this or that *particular* Scheme of Action, is free and voluntary.

There is a *Point* in Knowledge, where *Usefulness* ends, and *unconcerning Speculation* begins. As far as any Thing is *useful* and important to our Happiness, so far, by the Help of Revelation, all is generally clear and plain; *beyond* that, all is dark and inaccessible to us in a great Measure. The Reason is, God has drawn a Veil
over

over this Part of Knowledge, lest by attending to Things *remote* from *Use*, and Matters of mere *Curiosity*, the Mind should be diverted from useful and *practical* Inquiries. The Circle of our Knowledge, as far as it conduces to Happiness, though not very large, is, by the Help of Scripture, exact and full. To exemplify this, in the Point of the Redemption, some Persons complain of a Darkness spread over the Face of this Dispensation. But as to *what*? As far as it is a Doctrine of *Use* and *Importance*, so far it is clearly and distinctly revealed. We are expressly told, what our Saviour has purchased for us, and what we have to do, to qualify ourselves for the Happiness which he has purchased. It is discovered to us, that God, through his Merits, will confer upon every penitent Offender, that exceeding and eternal Weight of Bliss, which even the Unoffending could have had no Title to. *So far* it is a Doctrine of solid Use and Importance.

But we want, perhaps, more fully to understand the *internal Manner*, and *particular* Efficacy of his Merits and Intercession, and the *Whole* of the Transaction
between

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between the Father and the Son, in the stupendous Work of our Salvation. Here *mere Curiosity* commences; and therefore no Wonder, our *Knowledge* should in a great Measure *end*. These are the Things which Angels desire to look into; and we, till we are Angels, should not expect a full and comprehensive Satisfaction about.

Let us compare Creation and Redemption. From the former we derive our *Being*, from the latter our *eternal Well-being*. Both Truths are involved in great *Difficulties*: Both are either, *for* that Reason, to be rejected; or (which is the much better Conclusion,) both, *notwithstanding* that Reason, to be admitted.

I shall now, in the last Place, consider the Extent of the Redemption.

Our Saviour laid down his Life for the Sins of the whole World. He came that *as in Adam all dye, so in Christ should all be made alive*. *As by one Man's Disobedience many* (the many, or Mankind in general) *were made Sinners*, treated as such, and made subject to Death, *the Wages of Sin*; so, *by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*. Clemens Romanus,
an

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an Apostolical Father expressly declares, that *the Blood of Jesus was so precious in God's Sight, as to obtain the Privilege of Repentance for all the World, in all past Ages; and that the Ninevites, repenting, upon the Preaching of Jonas, were saved by it, though Aliens from God.*

From hence we may conclude, that, though those, who have performed the Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant, Faith and penitential Obedience, shall shine out with more distinguished Glory; yet the Benefits of his Passion shall be applied, in some Measure, even to those, who never heard of his Name. The Sphere of his Beneficence extended backwards to the Foundation of the World, and reaches forward to the last Conflagration; so that Nothing, which is capable of being saved, is *hid from the Heat thereof.* He became the Saviour of all Ages, from the first Birth of Time to it's last Period; the Father of Mankind, from the Rising up of the Sun, to the Going down of the same. The Blessings of his Coming into the World, were as extensive as the World, and as lasting as Eternity.

* Clemens Romanus, Epist. 1. cap. 7.

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View leisurely the stupendous Scheme
—a whole World *redeemed* from *Misery*—
a whole World made *happy*, if their own
Impenitence doth not prevent it——made
everlastingly happy : — and tell me, what
Sentiments it ought to inspire you with —
Why, Sentiments of Gratitude too *big* to
be *uttered*, too *fervent* to be *concealed*.

We think no Language too harsh, no
Usage too severe, to those, who can be
guilty of a base Ingratitude, to a generous
Friend, Parent, or Father of his Country.
But what are the most distinguishing Be-
nefits, which a Father of his Country, a
Parent, a Friend, can heap upon us, in
Comparison of what our *Saviour* has done
for us? Lighter than Vanity, and Nothing,
when weighed in the Balance with an ex-
ceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, the
greatest Blessing, that *Man* could receive,
or even *God* bestow.

And can we receive these astonishing
Endearments, this prodigious Expence of
Goodness, which, like the blessed Effects
that we are to receive from it, was such
as *Eye had not seen before, nor Ear heard,*
nor had it entered into the Heart of Man
to conceive ; Can we receive it, I say,
with

with a dull Insensibility, and a stupid Indifference?

If we find ourselves affected with endearing Sentiments of Love, towards virtuous Characters, which we read of in ancient History: If, when their Story is represented on the Stage, we feel our Hearts interested in their Favour: If we honour and esteem them, from whom we reap no Advantage: How much more ought we to love, esteem, and honour him, the Benefit of whose Actions and Sufferings reaches to all Ages, all Nations, all Mankind? What are they (the great Heroes of Antiquity) to us, or we to them; who might be an Honour to the Age in which they lived, but are of no Service to us; like Stars at an immense Distance, the Light of which may fill their own Sphere, but reaches not down to us? But our Saviour was a Person born for the whole World, for which he died, a Blessing to all Mankind from the *Beginning of Time*, and whom all Mankind will have Reason to bless, when *Time shall be no more*.

But let us remember, that there were two Ends of our Saviour's Coming into the World; the one to be a complete *Pattern* of

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of *Goodness* in his Life; and the other to ^{SERMON} be a full *Satisfaction* for *Sin* by his Death. ^{VI.}

In vain we expect to be saved by his *Death*, as a full Satisfaction for Sin; unless we endeavour to copy after his *Life*, as a complete Pattern of Goodness. He came, not to make our Repentance needless, but to make it valid and effectual. *Ye are not your own*, says St. Paul; *for ye are bought with a Price. Therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.*

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SERMON VII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE,

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.



MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

THE Text sets before us the solemn Commission, which our Saviour gave to the Apostles, by which they were to baptize all Nations into the Belief and Worship of the Holy Trinity. SERMON
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Though some have treated this Doctrine as a mere notional barren Thing; yet, that our *Saviour* is God, and the *Holy Ghost*
D d 2 God,

God, is no more a *speculative* Point, than this Proposition, viz. *there is a God*, is so. Both Propositions are the Foundations of several Duties, which are the necessary Parts of a good Life. The Worship of our Saviour as God, our Gratitude and religious Homage to him, as such, are practical Points, as much as any Offices of Morality whatever. The Knowledge of our Duty equally obliges us to the Performance of it; through whatever Channel it is conveyed, whether by the Light of Nature, or that of Revelation. And from the Time, that the Scriptures had discovered to us the Nature and respective Offices of our Redeemer and Sanctifier, we were as much obliged to adore Them, as to adore the Father. And if a wilful Neglect of behaving suitably to those Relations, which we bear to the Father and our fellow Creatures, makes us the proper Objects of Punishment; then a flagrant Neglect of acting suitably to those Relations, which we bear to the Son and Holy Ghost, must likewise expose us to the divine Displeasure. In short we do not live a good Life, unless we treat Beings, as what they are in themselves, and according to what they have done

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done for us. The Man, who does not, as ^{SERMON}
far as in him lyes, consider the Dignity of ^{VII.}
the Person of his Benefactor, nor the Great-
ness of the Benefits received from Him, is
an immoral Man. *His Life is wrong*, and
therefore *his Faith can never be right*.

To return to my Text, from which I
have digressed, "Whatever Persons" (as
a considerable Writer expresseth it) "are
named in Conjunction with God the Fa-
ther in such an authoritative Manner, as
to give a Commission, upon the Execu-
tion of which the Remission of Sins and
eternal Salvation depends, or in such a
Manner, as supposes Men to be *consecrated*
and *dedicated* to those Persons;
they all must be God." I shall, therefore,

Ist Endeavour to prove from *Scripture*,
that there are more Persons than One in
the divine Nature.

Illy I shall answer the Objections a-
gainst this Doctrine from the *Nature* of
the Thing.

Ist I shall endeavour to prove from *Scripture*,
that there are more Persons than One
in the divine Nature.

D d 3

I shall

I shall lay the main Stress upon the Divinity of our *Saviour*; because, if *that* is made good, there can be no reasonable Objection against the Divinity of the *Holy Ghost*; especially since he is said to *search all Things, yea the deep Things of God*, and to *know the Things of God*, (which no mere Creature can do,) as intimately as *the Spirit of a Man knoweth his own Thoughts*.
1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

In the 1st Place, the Scripture every where asserts, that God alone is to be worshipped; the same Scripture declares, that our Blessed Saviour is to be worshipped: The obvious Consequence of which is, our Saviour is God. Thus St. Stephen adores him with *direct* Worship: *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit*: Words of the same Force and Energy with those, which our Saviour offered up to the Father on the Cross: *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*. And again: to Him is *ascribed* *Glory and Praise and Dominion* (after his Mediatorial Kingdom, which some hath made the Foundation of his Worship, shall cease) *even for ever and ever*. All the Subtleties, by which the *Arians* would evade the Force of these Texts, only prove, that a Man of plain

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Understanding, but of an honest Heart, is SERMON
VII. less liable to err; than a Philosopher of much deeper Penetration, who has an *Attachment* to some favourite *Scheme*. For the Former, who does *not lean to his own Understanding*, rests in the most obvious and *natural* Construction of the Words of Scriptures. Whereas the Latter is fond of *Refinements*, and will invent a thousand Devices to confute (what will ever be too hard for Him) *common Sense*.

The *Heart*, when it is biased to any Darling Notion, will always get the better of the *Head*, how good soever it be. Therefore the first Rule should be even in the Search of saving Knowledge: *Keep your Heart with all Diligence.*

Thus the *Arians* own, that the Son is to be worshipped; but assert, that the Worship ought to terminate in the last Resort in the Father. To which I answer, that this Worship, which is paid to Christ, but, according to their Scheme, ought to terminate in the Father, is (to use their own Distinction, a Distinction which no where occurs in Scripture,) either supreme or inferior Worship. If the Former, then it ought not to be paid at all to the Son, pro-

vided he is an inferior Being. For supreme Worship is a Tribute due only to the Supreme God. It would be Sacrilege to give the highest Honour to any, who was not the highest in the Scale of Beings. But if the Worship offered to Christ was only an inferior Worship, then it was unworthy of the supreme Object, and consequently ought not to terminate in him, who would be dishonoured thereby. Besides, How can inferior Worship terminate in Him, who has forbidden all Creature Worship? It is a flagrant Crime to serve the Creature besides the Creator, and to worship Those who by Nature are no Gods. Either then our Saviour is God by Nature; or he is not to be worshipped.

But farther: Whatever unscriptural Distinctions some may make of supreme and subordinate Worship; yet he, who at the same Time that he dwelleth in Heaven, to make Intercession for us, can be present upon Earth, to know the Variety of Petitions, mental as well as vocal, private as well as public, which are put up by several Millions of People in different and widely distant Parts of the Earth in one and the same Moment of Time, and can be able to redress their Grievances, must be God.

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in the *highest* Sense of the Word. For 'tis ^{SERMON} the Deity alone, that can command such ^{VII.} an *unbounded Prospect*, with one View, and take in the whole Compass of Nature.

Either then all Prayer must be directed to a Being who *seeth in Secret*, who hath a free and unrestrained Admittance to the hidden Resources of the Heart, who is God *absolutely*. — Or we may be obliged to address ourselves in Prayer to a Person, who is not intimately present to whatever is transacted within the Breast, who cannot discern the internal and affectionate Application of the Mind to him, in short too ignorant to know, too impotent to relieve our Wants. But as this is highly absurd, it follows, that to whomsoever we are obliged to prefer our Petitions, he must be the *great Searcher of Hearts*, consequently our Saviour is so, and therefore God.

2dly It is said, that *he, who made all Things, is God*. But it is affirmed, that *all Things were made by the Word*, viz. our Saviour, and without him was not any Thing made, *that is made*, St. John i. 3. From hence we may infer, that Christ, as Creator, is God, rejecting the senseless Notion of a *Creature-Creator*. In Answer to this,

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the *Arians* mutter something very dark and obscure about the Prepositions *By* and *Through* (*By* or *Through* whom God made the World) intimating, what they care not to speak out, that our Saviour was a mere Instrument in the Work of the Creation, but forgetting, that the very same Preposition is likewise applied to the Father, *Through* whom are all Things; forgetting likewise, that not only all Things were created *BY* him, but also *FOR* him and by him they do consist. Col. i. 16, 17. And Things are not made for the Sake of the Instrument. And again, *Thou, Lord* (not another, through him) *Thou, Lord, hast laid the Foundation of Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. They all shall wax old, as doth a Garment; but thou art the same, and thy Years shall not fail.* Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

Add to this, that he is called God over all blessed for evermore. Romans ix. 25. The first and last, Alpha and Omega, which was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. Rev. i. 8, 17, 18. The mighty, the true, the great God: King of Kings, and Lord of Lord; in whom all the Fulness of the God-

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head dwelleth substantially: All Things are ^{SERMON}
naked and open to him: Upholding all Things ^{VII.}
by the Word of his Power.

To say, that when creative and providential Powers are ascribed to the Son, these are the Attributes and Powers of the Father communicated *to*, exercised *in*, and manifested *by* the Son, is to get rid of a Difficulty at the Expence of an Absurdity.

For how can there be a Communication of the essential Properties of the Deity without a Communication of the divine Essence?

Whatever Attributes are communicated, must be proportioned to the Capacity of the Receiver. And if the Son was not infinite; what was finite, could not be susceptible of infinite Attributes.

There is one material Flaw in the *Arian* Scheme, which must endanger the whole Fabrick, viz. that they have made two Gods, a God supreme, and a God inferior, in direct Opposition to the first Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods, but me; no other Elohim*, a Word, as the Learned know, expressive not only of supreme, but also of inferior Gods: The plain Sense of the Commandment therefore is this: *Thou shalt*

shalt have no other Gods, whether supreme or inferior, but the one *Jehovah*. That can never be true and genuine Christianity, upon the Principles of which it is impossible to confute any rational unprejudiced *Jew*: But upon the Principles of *Arianism*, it is impossible to convince any rational *Jew*. For the obvious Reply would be, that Religion must be false, which expressly contradicts the first Commandment: The *Arian* Scheme does so by setting up two Gods, the one Supreme, the other Inferior: And therefore must be false.

I shall beg leave to propose some Queries to those who are of a different Way of Thinking, which are as follow:

Whether in those Points, which have an immediate Connexion with Practice, and which relate to the great and fundamental Article of the Object of Worship, the Christian Religion, being intended for the Use of Mankind in *general*, must not be suited to that *common Sense* and Reason, which Mankind in *general* have, as *distinct* from *superior, exalted and refined* Sense, the distinguishing Perfection of a *few* only?

Whether, supposing *Arianism* to be true, *common Sense*, as distinct from *metaphysical* Subtilties,

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Subtilties, would enable the Generality of Mankind to distinguish between a Person, such as our Saviour was, *by whom all Things were created, and who upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power*; and a Person who is properly and essentially God?

Whether it would enable them to point out any Difference between a Person, *by whom all Things*, to which he must be present, *consist*, as they are said to do by our blessed Saviour; and a Person *strictly Omnipresent*? Whether they would not be apt to imagine, that he, whom St. Paul stiles *ever All, God blessed for evermore*, is the supreme God?

Whether, supposing, according to the *Arian Hypothesis*, two adorable Gods, one of which must infinitely transcend the other; the Bulk of Mankind could with a metaphysical Accuracy adjust their Homage to the Dignity of each Being to whom it was paid, never offering sovereign and absolute Adoration, where relative was only due; but lowering and heightening their Intentions, in an exact Proportion, so as never to exceed, nor to fall short in their religious Addresses?

Whether

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Whether *that* Sense of numberless Passages in Scripture relating to the Trinity, which occurs *first* to a Man of *natural Sagacity* and *Honesty*, who reads the Bible without any View to confirm a darling *Hypothesis*, is not generally the *true* one? Whereas that Interpretation, which depends upon refined Subtilties, artificial Turns of Wit and Criticism, and surprizing laboured Glosses, is greatly to be suspected.

Whether a *Polytheist* might not explain away all the scriptural Proofs for the *Unity* of the divine Nature by the same Subterfuges and evasive Arts, which an *Anti-trinitarian* makes Use of to elude the Arguments from Scripture to prove a *Trinity* of *Persons*?

Whether those Texts, which seem to imply the Son to be inferior to the Father, may not be reconciled with those, which ascribe to him all the essential Attributes of God, by understanding them either of his *human* Nature as distinct from the divine, or of the *ministerial Office*, which he undertook in the Oeconomy of the Redemption, or of such a *Subordination* only, *viz.* that of a Son to a Father, a mere Relation of *Order*, which is not incon-

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inconsistent with a strict Equality of Nature? ^{SERMON}
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Whether the exclusive Term of the *only* God, when applied to the Father, need be so rigorously interpreted, as to exclude not only *Creatures* and *other Gods*, which are *separate* from him; but even the Son and Holy Ghost, who are so united as to be *One*, and inseparably *included* with him? But if it must be thus rigorously interpreted, whether it will not follow from *Isaiab* and *St. Paul* compared together, that the Son likewise is the *only* God? *Look unto me and be ye saved, all the Ends of the Earth: For I am God, and there is none else: I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear.* *Isaiah* xlv. 22, 23. Compare the New Testament. *We shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me, and every Tongue shall confess to God.* *Romans* xiv. 10, 11. And again, *At the Name of Jesus every Knee shall bow of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth.* *Phil.* ii. 10.

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The Application of the Text in *Isaiah* to
Christ is manifest from these two Passages :

It is as manifest that the Person spoken of in *Isaiah* is the only God, *I am God, and there is none else*: Therefore Scripture treating of the Unity of God places it in another Person, besides the Father.

Whether common Christians, without understanding *technical* Terms, such as *Mode, Person, Substance, numerical, and specifical*, may not understand, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though *really* distinct from one another, may be so far *one*, as to have an *inseparable Union* of Presence, Will, and all Perfections; so far one, that they can no more *exist* or *act asunder*, than they can *not exist at all*?

Whether such a Faith, which requires no great Abstraction of Thought, may not answer several beneficial Ends; and incline them, from the Fulness of an ever-grateful Heart, to pay the Tribute of undissembled Love and Adoration to the Father, whose unfathomable Wisdom laid and concerted the stupendous Plan of our Redemption, to the Son, whose unbounded Love undertook the Execution of it, and to the Holy Spirit, whose never-failing

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Grace enables them to fulfil the Conditions of it?

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Whether common Christians may not have correcter Notions of the three divine Persons by resting in the *general* Truth of the Doctrine; than speculative Refiners, who want to have *explicit* and *determinate* Ideas of Things incomprehensible, who are for descending into minute Particularities, which, because they are Matters of *useless* Speculation and mere Amusement, are therefore unattainable by us?

The Objections against the mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel are every whit as strong for *Atheism*, as they are against *Christianity*. A Person, who is an *Half-Thinker*, may stop at half Way: But he, who will be at any Expence of Thought, must see, that for the very same Reason, for which he rejects the *three Persons*, viz. because the Doctrine is incomprehensible; he must, if consistent with himself, disbelieve even *one* divine Person. There is such a mutual Harmony and Correspondence in the *Compages* of Truths, that, *if one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it; and if one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it.* That some-

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thing has existed from all Eternity, is a Truth, which *forces* itself upon the Mind, and *extorts* the Assent of every thinking Man, of every Christian, Deist, and even Atheist. And yet I do not know any thing so hard of Digestion in the Doctrine of the *Trinity*; as there is in the Notion of *Eternity*, viz. that, whatever has existed without any Beginning, must have existed *no longer* at this *present* Moment of Time, than it had existed *Millions* of *Ages ago*. For the present Moment of Time is in the Center or Middle between two Eternities, that which is past, and that which is to come; the Moment of Time, that was present some Millions of Ages ago, was then the Center or Middle; and the Moment to come, some Millions of Ages hence, will be then the Center.

Christianity does not require us to puzzle ourselves or others with *metaphysical* Disquisitions; *how* or in what *particular* Manner three are so inseparably united as to be one; no more than natural Religion enjoins us to embarrass our Minds with Inquiries, *how* Fore-Knowledge in God is reconcilable with Free-Will in Man; *how* our Father, *which is in Heaven*, can be *about our Path*

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Path and about our Bed; how, if he is extended, the Consciousness of Being in Heaven, (though locally distinct and immensely distant) can be one and the same with the Consciousness of Being on Earth; or how, if he is unextended, he can act every where, without being substantially present; or how any Thing can be made out of Nothing. In all these Points we understand the Terms of the Propositions, and the Proofs of them from Reason or Revelation, without being able to penetrate into the Minutiae of them, and every curious Nicety relating to them.

Men may pretend to understand what they *do* not, and be ambitious of understanding, what they *cannot*; grasping at Things, to which their Capacities are not suited. The Man, who, without ever considering these Points as to their *Modus*, should immediately declare he knows nothing of the Matter, has made as great Advances in Knowledge in a Moment; as the Person who has impaired his Health, and exhausted his Spirits in such unconcerning Researches. Such are several Points in natural Philosophy, as well as Theology. The only Use they are of, is to check our

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Presumption, and to make us *know*, (a very useful Part of Knowledge, but of which some seem incapable,) that there are many Things, which we *cannot know*; that we had much better lay out our Time in knowing ourselves as to our *moral Character*; the *only Subject* perhaps, as to which the *more minute*, particular and full our Search is, without letting any thing, however small, escape our Notice; the more *useful* it will be: Yet this is a Subject, which we generally decline, as to any punctual and thorough Examination. As far as our Ideas extend, our Faith, which must keep Pace with our Ideas, reaches; and no farther. Thus we believe nothing concerning the precise and particular *Modus*, of the divine Unity, of the Reconcilableness of Fore-Knowledge with Free-Will, of Creation, &c. because we understand nothing fully about it. Only we think it highly unreasonable not to believe a Doctrine, *as far as* we understand it; because there is something in it (*viz.* the *Manner* of the divine Unity,) which we do *not* understand. As well might we reject the whole Theory of Vision, merely because we cannot conceive, how our Ideas, which have *no Dimensions*,

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can represent Columns, Statues, Buildings, which *have*. We have no very adequate Notions of the *Manner* of Unity even as to *material* Beings: For each material Being, however *one* in *some* Respect, in *others* is an *Infinity* of Beings, as it is infinitely divisible: How much more must we be at a Loss to ascertain the *Manner* of the divine Unity?

Let us then consider, how far our Point of View extends, what falls within the Reach of every well-constituted Eye, and what does not. Let us not venture upon an immense Ocean in a little feeble Bark, which will be *carried away with every Wind*, and soon overset. We cannot perceive the *internal* Constitution and real Nature of *material* Things, as they are in *themselves*; we only perceive them, as they are *relative* to, and affect us. Just so neither Reason nor Revelation was given us to attain to a Knowledge of the *intimate* Essence of the Deity, or, as some affect to call it, his *abstract metaphysical Substance*, what real Distinctions it may admit of, and how they are consistent with its Unity. Revelation was designed to let us know what the three Persons in the divine Nature have

done *for us*, and what *relative* Duties we owe to *them*. So far Knowledge was useful; and where Usefulness ends, Darkness and Ignorance generally commences. There are in every Branch of Science, as well as in Divinity, *the weightier Matters*, which may be understood with a proper Degree of Application; and there are also several *Minutenesses*, little *Punctilios*, and *fine-spun* *curious* Notions, which, like the *finer* Fibres and *minute* Particles of a Body, escape the acutest Eye; at the same Time that the *solid* and *substantial* Parts lye open to the View.

It is morally impossible we should err in judging *Christianity* to be true; because the Proofs for it are strong, decisive, and lye level to our Capacities; but we may very probably err in fancying that to be absurd, which relates to the Nature and *Essence* of the Deity, where there is an infinite *Disproportion* between the Faculty and the Object. If there be any *Criterion* of Truth, if we are not necessarily liable to be deceived; we may safely conclude, that, what has all the *distinctive* Characters of *Truth*, that any ancient Record can have, cannot be a Forgery or Imposture: But we cannot

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cannot be sure, but that in Matters of so SERMON
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high and elevated a Nature, what we conceive, (without clearly perceiving any thing) to border upon an Absurdity, may be not so in itself, but merely owing to our Want of more extensive Views. *One Proof* from a Matter of *Fact* should weigh more to *confirm a mysterious Doctrine*, than all the *ideal and metaphysical Arguments*, which fall short of Demonstration, to *disprove it*. Because we are very competent *Judges* of Matter of *Fact*; but all our Ideas about the *intrinsic Nature* of God are short and *indistinct*; and where our *Ideas* are *indistinct*, our Knowledge, which is founded upon them, must be so too. One intermediate Idea, which is wanting, might, if taken into the Account, make our Conclusion quite different: And one foreign Idea, which has intruded where it has nothing to do, will, like a little Leaven, spread and diffuse itself, and give a Tincture to the whole Mass of our Reasoning.

This is only a *general Answer* to the Difficulties with which this Doctrine is attended. Under my *second Head*, which must be reserved for another Discourse, I shall remove *particular Objections*.

SERMON VIII.

Preached at the

Lady MOYER'S LECTURE.

On the Doctrine of the Trinity.

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MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations,  
baptizing them in the Name of the Fa-  
ther, and of the Son, and of the Holy  
Ghost.

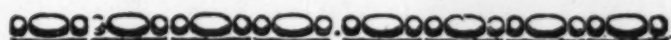
**T**HE Duty is to human Minds, SERMON VIII.  
what the main Reason is to nat-  
row Vessels: They may take in  
as much Knowledge of his Nature, as their  
scanty Dimensions will admit; and yet  
there will remain an infinite Surplus still,  
which we want Capacities to receive;  
wishing, that human Nature was raised to  
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# SERMON VIII.

Preached at the

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE.

On the Doctrine of the TRINITY.



MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations,  
baptizing them in the Name of the Fa-  
ther, and of the Son, and of the Holy  
Ghost*

**T**HE Deity is to human Minds, SERMON  
VIII.  
what the main Ocean is to nar-  
row Vessels: They may take in  
as much Knowledge of his Nature, as their  
scanty Dimensions will admit; and yet  
there will remain an infinite Surplus still,  
which we want Capacities to receive;  
wishing, that human Nature was raised to  
an

SERMON  
VIII.

an higher Perfection, that the divine Nature may be better understood, more perfectly loved, and more worthily praised,

The Chain of Beings ascends upwards, from Brutes to Men——from Men, in a beautiful and regular Gradation, to Angels, Archangels, and all those *thousand thousands, that stand before God, and the ten thousand times ten thousand, that minister unto him.* The Transitions in this Poem of Nature, from one Kind to another, are so extremely fine and delicate; that we scarce can distinguish, where one ends, and the other begins. Yet the Dignity of the noblest of these Beings, bears no more Proportion to his, who dwelleth in unapproachable Glory; than a gilded Cloud, on which the Evening Sun has impressed it's Beams, and enriched with beautiful Stains of Light, does to that great Abyss of Light, from which it derives it's reflected Beauty. He can still make Beings, which shall as much surpass an Archangel of the highest Class; as an Archangel of the highest Class surpasses the most groveling Insect. For every finite Creature, how great soever; must be infinitely beneath an all-perfect Being. This, however, is the  
Being,

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Being, whose Nature we would measure by our own, and make God after our Likeness, instead of humbly endeavouring to be as like him, as we can. The most advanced Notion, which we can form of him, as *distinct* from all his Creatures, is merely *negative*, excepting the Idea of necessary Existence, which may imply something positive. For Existence, Power, Goodness, Wisdom, &c. are not his *peculiar* and *incommunicable* Properties. When they are ascribed to him *without Bounds*, then they are Ideas *distinctive* of him, though Ideas purely *negative*, as implying only a *Negation of Limits*. We cannot extend even our Conjectures concerning the divine Nature, beyond those Ideas, which are derived from Sensation and Reflection: Yet, with these sorry Materials of Knowledge, some attempt to dethrone their Saviour and the Holy Ghost, and to degrade them into the Rank of Creatures.

I have already proved, from Scripture, that there are more Persons than one in the divine Essence.

I now proceed to clear this Doctrine from the principal Objections against it, from the Reason of the Thing.

All



All the Objections against the Trinity proceed from hence, that Men discourse about an *infinite Being*, as they would about a *finite* one, without considering the Difference of the Subject they are upon, and what an immense Disproportion there is. But this, certainly, is not to treat him as what he is : It is not to treat him, as a Being infinitely more remote, in the real Excellency of his Nature, from the highest and perfectest of all created Beings, than the greatest Man, nay, the purest Seraphim, is from the most contemptible Part of Matter : It is not to treat him, as a Being infinitely exceeding, what our narrow Understandings can conceive of him. We ought to distinguish carefully between Contradictions arising from a plain Perception of the Disagreement of Ideas, and mere Difficulties arising from the Want, Defect, and Imperfection of our Ideas. And certainly our Ideas must be very imperfect and defective, when the awful and tremendous Essence of the Deity is the Subject of our Enquiry. What Arrogance is it for us, whose Knowledge reaches no farther than the mere *Shell* and *Surface* of natural Things, to pretend to

*search*

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*Search the Almighty to Perfection, to penetrate into the intrinsic Nature of God, and to pronounce, with a decisive Air of Self-sufficiency, he must exist in this particular Manner, and no other*

The poor groveling Creature, that would audaciously sound the unfathomable Depths of an *uncreated Essence*, yet is a *Mystery to himself*, his *little despicable Self*, and can no more account for the Union of Soul and Body, two Substances yet one Person; than he can comprehend the awful Mystery of three Persons, yet one indivisible Substance, in a Subject infinitely removed beyond the narrow Ken of an human Understanding.

The first and grand Objection against the Divinity of our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, is this: That either the three Persons must be three Substances, which is *Tritheism*, or they must be three Modes, which is *Sabellianism*.

It is thus, Man, weak Man, most assured of what he is most ignorant, and most ignorant of what he should know best, viz. *himself*, argues against well-supported Truths, from loose Conjectures and visionary Notions, drest up in the Form of  
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strict Reasoning, without the Power thereof, and then dignifies his crude and indigested Notions with the pompous Name of *Demonstration*, where the only Demonstration is, that the Subject admits of none.

For in the first Place, though in *finite* Beings there is no Distinction but that of Modes and Substances; we cannot hence infer, that the *unsearchable* Nature of God may not admit of some other *real* but incomprehensible Distinction; a Distinction *greater* than that of three *Modes*, yet less than that of three *Substances*.

Though an human Soul is a Spirit as well as God; yet Spirit, or immaterial Being, does not point out, as Body does, one *determinate* Kind of Being, but *every Sort* of Beings, that are not corporeal \*. It is a negative Idea, a mere Denial of Matter. As my Soul is of a quite different Essence from the Table on which I write, though they are both Substance: So God transcends my Soul, though they are both Spirit, infinitely more, than my Soul can the Table. To

\* See Dr. Clarke on the Omnipresence, in the first Volume of his Posthumous Sermons.

argue then from our Nature to the divine; SERMON  
VIII.  
to say that because the one admits of no  
Distinction, but that of Modes and Sub-  
stances, the other may not: What is this,  
but to argue *a pari*, where there is an  
infinite *Disparity*, a boundless Dispropor-  
tion?

2dly, Those, who object that we must,  
either with the *Sabellians*, maintain the  
Persons to be three *Modes* only; or with  
the *Tritheists*, three *Substances*; must first  
demonstrate, that Substance and Substance,  
however close and *inviolable* the *Union* may  
be, must necessarily make Substances; or  
that Being and Being cannot be so united  
as to be one. For if they cannot demon-  
strate this, there will be this plain Me-  
dium between *Sabellianism* and *Tritheism*,  
that the three Persons will be more than  
three Modes, each being Substance; and  
yet not three Substances, because *indisso-*  
*luble Union* of Substance with Substance  
may constitute *Unity*; or whatever is *essen-*  
*tially* and *necessarily* united, may be *essen-*  
*tially* and *necessarily* one. Thus our Sa-  
viour's Words, *I am in the Father, and*  
*the Father in me*, will give the best Solu-  
tion of the Difficulty.



I may observe farther, that either Being and Being in union does *not* make *Beings*; or there is no such Thing as *one Being in Nature*, upon *their Hypothesis*, who maintain, as the most able Defender of *Arianism* does maintain, that spiritual, as well as corporeal Beings, are *extended*. For each *extended Being*, it is well known, is nothing but *Being* and *Being in Union*; and only one, because of the *Continuity* and *Indiscerpibility* of the *Parts*. He (that great Master of Reason) supposed the Deity to be *infinitely expanded*. It was likewise his Opinion, that there was no Medium between *a Being* and *Nothing*, and that *Person* was an *intelligent Being*. Well: The Deity, according to his Scheme, must consist of an *Infinity* of *Parts*——*Each* of those *Parts* must be either *a Being*, or *Nothing*.——*Each* of these *Parts* must be likewise an *intelligent Being*. For an *intelligent Whole* cannot be made up of *unintelligent Parts*.——And if *each* of these *Parts* be an *intelligent Being*; —— then *each* must be a *Person*:—The Consequence of which is, that according to his *Hypothesis*, there must be *as many Persons* in an *infinitely expanded Substance*, as there are *Parts*.

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*Parts.* Thus this great Philosopher (for SERMON  
VIII. a great Philosopher he certainly was) at the same Time that he opposed the *Catholic* Scheme of *three* Persons, in the same undivided Substance; must, if consistent with himself, maintain, *many more* than three Persons, even an *Infinity* of Persons in the same Substance.

Such is the Frailty of human Nature even in great Men. They can see the least *Mote* of a Difficulty in another's Scheme; they cannot behold the *Beam*, that is in their own.

Nor was he singular in that Opinion: Several able Philosophers, both at home and abroad, have embraced the Scheme of *Extension*. Now the same Principle, *viz.* that Being and Being *in Union*, does not make a *Plurality* of Beings, which acquits them from the Charge of *Polytheism*, clears the *Orthodox* likewise from the Imputation of *Tritheism*. If this Principle does *not* hold true, they must consequentially maintain an *Infinity* of Gods; if it *does*, we cannot be said to maintain a *Trinity* of Gods.

It is not material to examine, whether the *Hypothesis* of Extension is true or false;

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the *Principle*, upon which alone the Patrons of it can be vindicated from the Charge of asserting a *Multitude* of Deities, will stand it's Ground.

Let us try the whole Force of *Metaphysics*; let us think as much as possible upon the Stretch; yet, after the utmost Expenditure of Thought, the only Conceptions we can frame of the divine Unity are Indivisibility and Simplicity; the one amounting to no more than a Negation of Division, and the other of any foreign or *heterogeneous* Mixtures. He who from these two *negative* Ideas would *positively* infer, that there must be only one Person in the divine Nature, must form a Demonstration, where he has not sufficient *Data* to build upon. It is hard to fix a positive Principle of *Individuation*, from whence we may clearly argue, even in *finite* Beings. I know some make *Consciousness* the Ground of Unity: But then *what* is the Ground of *Consciousness*? Nothing can be the Ground, Reason, or Principle of any Thing, which is, in the Order of our Ideas and of Nature, *subsequent* to the Thing, of which it is supposed to be the Ground. But *Consciousness* is *subsequent*

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to the Unity; and therefore *not* the Ground of it. Consciousness is that *reflex* Act, by which I *know* what I am: Now, if I must *be* what I am, (one or more) before I *know* what I am; then Consciousness must be *subsequent* to the Unity. The *being* what I am, must be the Foundation of my *knowing* what I am, and not *vice versa*. Consciousness, a personal Act, does not *constitute*, but *presuppose*, the *Personality*, from which the personal Act results. It may be added, that, if we are only one because conscious; then we put off Unity, like our Clothes, when we lye down and fall asleep; and resume it again, when we awake. This Scheme bears a near Resemblance to his, who made Necessity a mere Mode of Existence, in the Order of our Ideas, antecedent to, and the Ground of, the Substance, whose Mode and Attribute it was: Just so, this *Hypothesis* supposes Consciousness to be the Ground of an *Identity*, which must be *prior* to the Consciousness.

A late very able Writer has not been very happy, in endeavouring to refine upon this Scheme, by denying Consciousness to *constitute*, yet allowing it to *ascertain*, or



be the *Criterion* of, the Identity; which is as much as to say, we are *conscious* we are one—*therefore* we are one: Whereas the Process of the Argument should be thus: We *are* one—therefore we are *conscious* we are one: The Truth of our conscious Knowledge depending upon the Nature of Things; and not the Nature of Things upon our conscious Knowledge.

Dismissing therefore Consciousness as the Ground of Unity, we can advance no farther, than that Maxim of the Schools, *Unum est indivisum in se*. The Persons then are each *Being*—because they exist, invested with *distinct Offices* and peculiar *Relations*; but not *Beings*, because they do not exist *separately*.

And this puts me in Mind, secondly, of another Objection; that if Union of Substance with Substance, constitutes one Substance, then Union of Persons with each other must constitute one Person.

But to this I answer, that the Objection supposes Unity of Person and Substance to be the same, which wants to be proved. We use the Word Plurality of *Persons* to express that the Substance, however united, is yet *distinguished by appropriate*

*propriate* Relations, as that of a Son to a Father, and by distinct Offices : Whereas Plurality of *Substances* implies, the Substance to be *divided* or *divisible*. So many *separable* Persons are so many *Substances* ; but Persons, *incapable* of any *Disunion* or Division, are *one Substance*. Observing that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are every where, in Scripture, dignified with the same infinite Perfections of Power, Knowledge, &c. and invested with the same essential Attributes ; we conclude, they have all the same Essence ; the Essence being nothing but an Assemblage of all the essential Attributes : But finding, that they have likewise personal Properties, distinct Offices, and Relations, we conclude they are distinct Persons.

It may be objected, that the Son is not self-existent : And if not self-existent, then not necessarily-existent. But I reply, the Ideas are distinct : The former implying, *whence* a Being is ; the latter, *what* he is : Self-existent, that the Being is of *none* ; necessarily-existent, that the Being *immu-*  
*tably* exists : The one is a mere *negative* Idea, being only a Negation of any Cause of Existence ; the latter implies something

*positive, viz.* Permanency, Stability, and an infinite Ability to exist. The Son, though he is of the Father, and therefore not self-existent; yet is necessarily-existent, being the *Jehovah*, the *αὐτός*, and is co-eternal with the Father: Just as Thought, however subsequent in the Order of our Ideas, is co-eval with an eternal thinking Mind. Nor is there any more Difficulty, in the Notion of an eternal Reference of the Son to the Father, than there is in the Notion of Eternity itself.

After our Adversaries have darkened this Subject, by *metaphysical* Objections, and speculative Niceties, concerning Modes and Substances, Person and Essence, self-existent and necessarily-existent; which, if we do not reply to, they tell us, *all that we can say will be to no Purpose*; it is very unfair, thirdly, to object that this Doctrine is too obscure to be made an Article of Faith; the common People having not Capacities to apprehend it.

To this I answer, that the common People may understand the *Doctrine* of the Trinity; and yet not be competent Masters of the *Controversy* about the Trinity. They may survey the plain Scripture Ground upon

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upon which it stands, without being able to comprehend the elaborate *Entrenchments* and *Fortifications*, which are raised to repel the vigorous Attacks of it's Enemies. Secondly, The Doctrine is very clear as to the *Proofs*; and as to the *Manner*, not more obscure than Eternity, Self-Existence, and Omnipresence, which every Body must believe. A Man of plain Sense may believe, and have general Ideas, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far really distinct as not to be one the other, may yet be so inseparably united as to be one, in as strict a Sense as any Thing he can frame a Notion of here, is one; and that though three Persons multiply and divide the *human* Nature; it does not follow, that they must divide or multiply the *divine*, which transcends ours, infinitely more than our Nature does that of insensate Matter. The Persons are *distinct* and real, as any *other* Persons are; but so *united* withal, as *no other* Persons are, or can be: And therefore they are not (like *other* Persons) as *many Beings*, as *Persons*; but *one* Being only. Just so a Man may have a *general* Idea of Eternity: He may *understand*, (without being able to *imagine* any Thing about



it) that there must be a Being, who had no Beginning of Existence : But when he would endeavour to obtain a more *explicit, distinct, and determinate* Idea, the Mind is quite overwhelmed, by an Object too big, unweildy, and disproportioned to be grasped and managed by it. In vain our Mind widens, to take in the vast Idea of an Eternity ; in vain it adds thousands to thousands, and millions to millions ; our Thoughts are quite lost and swallowed up in Infinity. So far is it from being true, that, as one expresses it, *Religion ends where Mystery begins* ; that Religion begins with a Mystery, the greatest Mystery of all, the Self-Existence and Eternity of God. Let a Man acquaint us, how Eternity can be *past*, unless it was *once present* ; and how that could be *once present*, which had *never a Beginning*.

The *Generality* walk on in the plain high Road of common Sense : They see the Doctrine of the Trinity is edifying, and not more unintelligible, than that a Being *which is in Heaven, should be about our Path, and about our Bed* : *of the Soul*

They are your *metaphysical* Adventurers, that lose themselves, and others, in studied Intricacies.

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Intricacies. *Time* and *Place* are what every Body knows in the *Gross*; and yet let them pass through the Hands of a *Metaphysician*, and they become too fine and subtle for each *grosser* View. Desire a Person to meet you at such a *Time* and *Place*; he shall never stay to deliberate about the Meaning of the Terms: But Philosophers have raised such a Cloud of learned Dust about them, that one shall not know what to make of them. It is thus as to the Trinity: The Doctrine, as to the main Substance, is clear enough to be looked upon; though too deep to be seen through\*. We may take a *general* View of it, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be distinct, without being divided; united but not confounded: We then bewilder ourselves, when we would too nicely scan the *minute* Circumstances, and would fix a *particular* and *determinate* Mode.

Indeed, in most metaphysical Disputes, we are like Men upon *marshy* Ground: We may skim lightly over the *Surface*, and take a *general* Survey of the Nature of the Soil: But if we dwell *too long* upon any *particular* Spot; if we must *criti-*

\* See Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Trinity. pag. 20.  
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*cally* and *minutely* examine into the Ground on which we tread, we *sink* of Course; and the *more* we struggle to get free; the more, except we have uncommon Strength, we are *gravelled* irretrievably.

The Truth of the Case is this: Our Prospect is bounded by a very narrow Horizon; our Faculties limited within a very narrow Sphere of Activity. *Within* that Sphere lye the Proofs of God's Attributes, and of Matter of Fact, upon which Revelation depends: And *within* that Sphere Things, in the Main, are *easy* and *obvious* to us. *Beyond* it, *all*, except a few negative indeterminate Ideas, is an immense *Blank* to us: And *beyond* it, if any Thing, the *Manner* of the Divine Existence, and the *Nature* of the *Unity* and *Distinction* in the tremendous Deity, are *infinitely* removed.

I may observe farther, that the *Antitritonians* first introduced *Metaphysics* into this Question, on Purpose to perplex it with laboured Abstractions, and studied Refinements; and then the *Catholics* were obliged, though reluctant, to follow them through all their Mazes and Windings, to shew that the Doctrine would abide the Test of *Metaphysics*. For if some Men's Understandings,

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Understandings, like the Earth *under the* SERMON  
VIII. *Curse*, will be fruitful of little else, *but* *Thorns and Thistles* to entangle and perplex; it is a Duty incumbent upon the Labourers in the Vineyard, to *weed* the Soil, and not let the Doctrine be *over-run* and *choaked* by them.

Whoever has examined all the wild Paradoxes, and particular Tenets, of the Philosophers, ancient and modern; will be sensible, that *Stupidity* has not misled the *Unthinking* into more palpable *Absurdities*; than an *Affectation* of thinking out of the *common Road*, has betrayed some of the *finest Geniuses* and *ablest* Scholars.

Nor is Reason oftner in some Men the Dupe of the *Passions*; than it is in others of the *Imagination*, of an inventive, adventurous Imagination, launching out into those Depths, where it can find no sure Footing.

The grand Inlet of Error has been to argue *a priori*, from antecedent philosophical Notions; and then to *pervert* the Scripture to countenance those Notions, to press it into the Service, and compel it to come in; which has been the Source of *Heresy*: Or else to *reject* it; which has been the Source of *Infidelity*. And



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And what is this, but to push our Enquiries beyond our Capacities? Matter of Fact (a Revelation supported by well-attested Matters of Fact) is here *all in all*: But to argue from the *abstract Nature* of the Thing, of which we know little or nothing, is what we may *miscal* human Reason; but is in Reality *human Conjecture*, not to say, human *Folly and Pride*. It is to pretend to *Wisdom*, without having, what is the *Beginning* of Wisdom, a reverential Fear of God before our Eyes. There is a *metaphysical Knight-Errantry*, a *speculative Fool-Hardiness*, in some very great but too enterprizing Men, which tempts them to *grapple* with Objects, to which every judicious Stander-by sees their Strength to be vastly unequal.

And *whatever Absurdities* some People may alledge, without being able to prove, against the Trinity; the *greatest Absurdity* of all is, that weak *ignorant* Creatures should *pretend* to fathom an *infinite Subject* with a very *scanty Line*. Want of Humility in Points of so high a Nature, is always, in some Degree, want of Sense. There may be a bright and sparkling Imagination, without Humility; but there  
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can be no such Thing as a well-poised <sup>SERMON</sup> Judgment, and sound sober Sense. For <sup>VIII.</sup> good Sense teaches us to be diffident of our own Sense, where the Subject is placed beyond the Boundaries of clear and distinct Perception.

Let us then proceed, in our Researches after Truth, with all due Humility and Modesty. It is better to be in the Wrong in some few Points, with Modesty and Humility; than to be in the Right (which is not often the Case) with those proud and presumptuous Reasoners, who stand upon Terms with their Maker, and lose the *humble and meek Christian*, in the vain *Disputer of this World*. For however valuable a clear Discernment, and an uncommon Reach of Thought may be; yet Humility, which does *not exercise itself in Matters which are too high*, is undoubtedly far more amiable in the Sight of that Being, who though he *inhabiteth Eternity*, yet *dwells with the Lowly and Contrite*. It is better *having one Eye*, though we do not see so clearly, to *enter into Life*; than *having two Eyes*, with all our Quick-Sightedness, and enlarged Views, *to be cast into Hell*: Which may be the Case, if Mis-  
belief

belief in an important practical Point, is occasioned, not by any Defect of Understanding, but by the Perverseness of the Will. Not to believe, till *all* Difficulties are cleared up, and *all* Intricacies unravelled, is a very unreasonable Demand : For *All* cannot be cleared up ; except we could comprehend the divine Nature, and take in the whole Plan of Providence, from everlasting to everlasting. We then give the best Proofs of the *Strength* of our Reason, when we own the *Weakness* of it, in the *deep Things of God* ; humbly content to see him *through a Glass darkly* ; till we can see him *as he is, Face to Face* : To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.



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